

THE SECOND OFFICERS'S WIFE AND OTHER STORIES

About the Author

After a mixed career at sea during which he failed to write the novel he wanted to Robert has produced a full length novel "Anwei's Diamond, the Diamond Makers" and the following shorter reads. He is able to draw on his experience to paint, with knowledge, unusual situations and draw sensitive and sympathetic characterisation of the people in various scenarios.

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THE SECOND OFFICER'S WIFE

How the ginger kid can get into the ascendancy.

All of the stories in this book are pure fiction without any reference to real people but the stories are realistic representations of the environment, law and attitudes of the times in which they are set.

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THE SECOND OFFICER'S WIFE

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PROLOGUE

Julian and I were old friends. We'd been at school and uni' together and, I guess, he was the bright one. He had landed himself a job at the BBC and his situation was what might be called a 'career path'. On the other hand I had struggled to become a print journalist and was in great danger of completely missing the boat with respect to the new electronic Internet media.

We met in a pub in Notting Hill. After the first pint and joshing around a bit he looked at me seriously. 'Have you heard of Lilly Bauman?' he asked.

'Of course, she has the most beautiful voice in England. I've got some of her CDs.'

'So you like her?'

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'I could fall for her but she's a bit older and I have a wife and a kid. Eh, anachronism beats us all.' I said.

'I've got a bit of a problem and maybe an opportunity for you.'

'Shoot.'

'She's not suitable to go on 'Who Do You Think You Are'. Some people don't have enough of a story or they would be distressed after they find their ancestors were crooks or fascists or worse, or they're frightened family and friends may be upset by personal revelations.'

'So what? Where do I come in?' I asked pointedly.

'She wants a biography or autobiography done. Not to be on TV but as a book. She wants to have some control which she thinks she won't have if it's on the box. Death of her mother: unsolved mystery. We can't run it because we can't find the evidence and it could reveal a murder.'

'O.K. so you think I can do it justice; a major celeb'?'

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'Well you're a bloody writer aren't you? I am offering to recommend you to her. She is lovely. She is puzzled by a lot of things which we brought to light in our research and she wants to have time with someone sensitive who can write this stuff up in the form she wants. In the end it may be a biography or an autobiography with you credited with assisting her. You will be recognised.'

I didn't bite his arm off but sat there for a moment thinking of the joy of settling debts and even taking Jane on holiday.

'You're a good mate, Julian. I am up for it. Actually I'm up for anything that pays, just now. My God, Lilly Bauman and she's actually very well known, famous and has an enormous fan following. Why didn't she do it before?'

'Too busy, too modest and her agent's not really on the ball. He's an old Welshman, not a very shrewd businessman in today's world. You're right; they should have done it years ago. However my guess is: now is the hour. You'll not only get the fans to buy it but a much wider public. When you deal with Mr. Davies, her agent, make sure you get a cut of the

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royalty as well as a fee based on the work you do.'

I scooped the third pint and told Julian to go ahead and went home mentally spending the money.

In the next few days I called Lilly a few times and finally got through and had a very pleasant meeting. She was unsure about the need for an autobiography or a biography. What she really needed was something else incidental to the work. I said I would oblige if I could. I got in touch with her agent and then with a publisher I had in mind. The agent was very obliging with a fee and the publisher said he would give me an advance as soon as I gave him a thousand word synopsis and a sampler of about ten thousand words.

Here's the story. I have characterised some of the players based on the written evidence to make them come to life but stuck as closely as possible to the facts as they appear in evidence.

Jeremy Ancaster.

1 WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

A large Mercedes pulled up outside Captain Ferring's bungalow, tied accommodation attached to the School of Navigation. Julian, in designer jeans and a tropical shirt got out of the driving seat and a smartly dressed, blond woman, vaguely familiar, alighted from the passenger side. Ferring had been about to draw the curtains on the early dusk, and seeing them he had assumed they were visiting some other house and was surprised when they came up his path and rang his bell.

"Good evening, Sir," said the young man looking down at his clip board. "Am I speaking to Captain Ferring?"

"Who wants to know?" asked Ferring coldly.

"We are doing a thing for the BBC. Look, this may be a bad moment but we came down to visit someone in Southampton by appointment but they are in hospital. As we were passing and you were on our list we

thought we'd chance it. I am afraid we couldn't call you in advance because we don't have your phone number. Could you spare us a few moments of your time?"

"What's it about?" he replied always suspicious of the press and reporters. "What do you want from me?"

"For the BBC, 'Who Do You Think You Are?'," he said, getting the stress wrong so it sounded like a direct question.

"I know who I am. Who the hell are you? What do you want?" he moved the door as if to shut it.

"Do you recognise this lady?" Julian asked before the door closed.

"Perhaps," said Ferring, "are you an actress?" he asked looking into her eyes and recollecting something on TV.

"A singer; I've been lucky. I've been asked to go on this show: 'Who Do You Think You Are?' have you heard of it? This is Julian and he's doing the research. I am supposed to be having fun going back over my relatives but I

don't have much to go on. My name is Lilly Bauman; I'm quite popular singing both classical and choral music. My name was originally Liza and Julian found out my birth name was Price. My birth mother was Welsh: Bronwyn was her first name."

"Jesus, not this again! I hoped it had all gone away." Ferring said, glaring at Julian and then turned to Lilly with a smile. "So are you Bronnie's daughter? She gave you away for adoption"

"Yes, my mother disappeared later, they say. My adoptive parents were wonderful and I was not properly aware of my adoption until I was twenty-one by which time I was into my career and was not curious."

"Come in and sit down," he said gruffly leading them into the sitting room. It was a small room for such a large and imposing man, over six feet tall with a straight back and slightly military bearing. There was a well worn armchair and a small, cheap sofa and a dated television; definitely a bachelor residence.

Julian looked a bit uncomfortable but he came in quietly and sat beside the beautiful fiftyish star. "Er, perhaps I should explain the circumstances," he opened hesitating.

"It's very simple," said Ferring, "I knew your mother. We were lovers. She disappeared. It was actually very complicated and resulted in a tragedy, ruined lives, broken marriage, imprisonment, you name it. It was a compound tragedy."

"Were you involved in the disappearance?"

"Up to my neck," Ferring said, looking angry.

"Oh Julian, why didn't you warn me?" exclaimed Lilly, obviously alarmed.

"I didn't know the story," he paused and looked across to Ferring with fear and shifted his gaze to Lilly in consternation. "Look, I was fed a list of names of variously connected people. All this happened before I was even born! I couldn't see the connection between you and this err, Captain Ferring, but he was on the list and we've had a wasted day in

Southampton and I just thought 'why not?' It's what I'm paid for."

Julian and Lilly turned toward Ferring.

"I've been working here for five years," he rejoined. "Fifteen years ago they let me out. For five years I was skipper on an effluent barge on the Thames another five years dredging for aggregates off the coast and at sixty five they booted me out. Thank God for this little job here: I teach navigation and ship stability. I may be able to stay on but this year they may boot me out from here. The college never connected me to the case, thank goodness. I gave them a story about going to Hong Kong and losing all my money on derivatives and having my records destroyed in a sinking. I think you get my point. I may be able to help you but I certainly won't be on television or allow my name to be used." He looked around the room and then at the two of them on the sofa. They looked harmless but he knew they were a real and present danger to his future.

"We'd better have a drink. I drink rum these days but I have gin and some tonic, a

bottle or two of lager and some Coke which I mix with rum, although some people may think it's tea time."

Lilly asked for Coke without rum and Julian said he'd like lager if the bottles were small. When he returned the captain continued:

"I cannot explain here as we speak. Actually I loved her; well, as much as I have loved any woman, but I was moved on and she married Oliver Watkins. I was also fond of Ollie but, well, he had problems with her. It was a horrible story and has led to the deaths of two people I loved and respected and to my incarceration. I suppose you really want to know and you have the right to know the fate of your mother.

"It was truly an accident. I was certainly to blame. I think the jury brought the murder verdict because they were morally appalled by the circumstances. The appeal against the murder charge succeeded on a technicality of the law but the judge in the appeal still applied a harsh sentence for the lesser offence of manslaughter by negligence."

"How the hell did it happen?" demanded Lilly, "I am shocked but I am not a baby anymore and my life has been good but, do I understand that I never had the chance to know my mother because you killed her?"

"Well not quite but technically, yes," said Ferring looking downcast.

Ferring waved his arm in the direction of his bedroom.

"I may be able to help you with a lot of written stuff I have about her, about me, how it happened. It was bad but not evil. I have put it to bed in my mind but it still haunts me....."

"As it bloody well should!" she interrupted and then burst into tears. "Why did you bring me here, Julian? Is this man who killed my mother a monster? And did he spend years in prison? Who is he to me?"

Julian looked frightened. He had precipitated this meeting without knowing what he was doing. He was a media journalist and now as a researcher for television had been enjoying his career until this moment. He

even wondered if Ferring might be dangerous; a murderer.

Ferring had gone into the bedroom and returned with a brown foolscap envelope. "To start with some photos. There is more material but I will have to track it down and review it before I send it out to you.

"Lilly I want you to promise you will not publish anything with my name mentioned until you have read the whole story and then only with my permission. Julian you are held to the same promise. I know you are a journalist but I will go after you if you break the promise and publish anything inflammatory or sensational.

"Actually, you may not have to keep your promise for many years. I am awaiting a final diagnosis for breathing problems: cancer. We'll see."

They were both silent for a while as Julian found his way out of Warsash toward the main road. As they approached Sarisbury Green Lilly asked:

“Could you take me to a hotel in Southampton? Look how late it is and I feel completely bushed. Just drop me off at the Novotel across the road from the station. I’ll get back to London by train in the morning. I want to look at this stuff.” After the drive, Julian went into the hotel with Lilly’s small suitcase and booked a room for her. She carried the large brown envelope.

As she was about to get into the lift she turned and said, “Julian, why don’t you stay? I hate eating alone and perhaps we can find some interesting material from what’s in the envelope.”

He went back to reception and took a room. They arranged to meet in the bar in half an hour.

Each refreshed themselves in a shower and came down to the bar.

As she perched on the stool beside him she smiled broadly and started off in a bright mood, “You know, I was a bit scared when I first proposed to stay in the hotel on my own: I am sorry but I did not want you to share any surprises the ghastly past might reveal. But

now, with a change of heart, I know I'll feel better with you here. I don't need to hide anything. My life is good and, at least in the public eye, I have been successful and achieved a lot. In other words I am confident. Do you understand?"

"What will you drink, Miss Bauman?"

"Lilly, please. I am not Miss Bauman anyway. I am Mrs. Liza Scott. You can forget Scott. We had two sons together but then he buggered off with a younger woman who wasn't famous and busy every evening. She couldn't sing a note but I believe she is an excellent cook. Can you imagine?" she laughed out loud. "Anyway, what about a rum and blackcurrent? I got used to it when I had trouble with the vocal cords."

Julian turned to the barman. "Could you get a rum and black for the lady?" and then back to Lilly.

"Lilly, you don't know how privileged I feel sitting with you here just the two of us quietly chatting."

“Perhaps it would help us both if I were to tell you a bit more about how I got to where I am. I only put bits of it together before the BBC arrived on my doorstep. I really had a lovely childhood. My Mum and Dad were the loveliest of people but when I was about eleven I got the first inkling that things weren’t quite as they seemed. My father came home one evening very upset. He had been jostled at the bus stop. There was a partial strike and the buses were overcrowded and it was normal to have to miss two buses because they were full. The people in the queue would get a bit restless but he was upset and Suzy saw it and forced him to tell her about it. ‘They said: “Walk home Jew boy, no Yids.” Then they laughed that horrible laugh we used to hear before the war.’ But worse happened. He’d walked home through the streets. He passed a pub and he saw men drag a piano out of the bar. They took sledge hammers and ‘they murdered that piano.’ He told us they hit it with enormous vindictive maliciousness. He did not have tears for the racist insult. He was used to that, but to wreck a piano in broad daylight with such hatred. It made him so sad.”

“Look at me” she said, “I am a true blond and blue-eyed, round cheeks and freckles when the sun comes out. It never occurred to me before that incident, but my mother had black hair, deep brown eyes and an aquiline, rather sad face. Although my dad was fairer-skinned he had rich, brown, curly hair and strong, heavy features. I was not very like them.” She paused for thought. “They called him ‘Jew boy’. I agonised that perhaps I was Jewish. Why the agony? But, strange as it would seem now, there was an underlying prejudice against Jews. I found out later that the teachers and other parents who had seen me going home with my mother assumed she was the maid. She always dressed in dark, second hand clothes from habit and her frugality helped us to buy our music.”

She gave Julian a big wide smile and took a swig of her drink. “You see, Suzanna Bauman, my mother, is the reason for my success. She was devoted to music. She had been given a half size Dresden violin at an early age and had been a prodigious player. She told me a very sad story about that violin. As she waited on the platform for the *kinder transport* train, aged eight, a Gestapo mustering officer had

taken her little violin in its canvas case and smashed it into small pieces against the wall and then under his highly polished boots.

“She told me she was devastated with grief because she had loved the violin more than any teddy, as it would be the only normal thing in her future alien life. She said that just holding the canvas and feeling the neck of the instrument below her fingers or cuddling the body was her security. That violin had been her only beloved friend as she was separated from her parents and shunted around among the thousands of other bewildered kids. She dragged the canvas bag with the broken woodchips all the way to England.”

She took another sip of her drink and saw the sadness in Julian's eyes, perhaps a tear.

“Don't worry. After a couple of weeks of official bullying and discomfort she was fostered by a Welsh couple. Of course, she only spoke German but as soon as she was in the house she spotted their violin in the front room by the piano. She told me how she went over and stroked the polished case. These people were very musical. The husband was quite a bit

older and his war effort was as a warden. The wife was engaged at the coal mine in the kitchen, feeding the hungry miners. She could not communicate with them when she arrived but they understood that she was curious about the violin so they opened up the case and handed it to her. It was not a miniature but a three quarter they saw her take it up tuning it by ear and then she played a couple of pretty exercises. Well they were all at one immediately and she was chattering away in a mixture of Welsh and English within a month or so."

Lilly was pleased to see that Julian was smiling again.

"So my dearest mother was tutored by Mrs. Griffith and joined the choir as accompanist but she could never sing. She had suffered from a terrible virus in Germany, as an infant, and her voice was spoilt for life. She said she was happy to play but envied some of the singers' beautiful voices. She was terribly keen for me to sing and for me to continue to learn to play. I excelled at the violin, learnt to play piano and was trained as a classical singer. Suzanna and Zak were very

encouraging and immensely kind. When I found out later that they were not my natural parents I was not fazed at all. It wasn't important. They had provided for me all the love and attention any child could wish for. Of course, in addition, I was working ever so hard because I had made my first successful record when I was sixteen and had a silver or golden disc almost every year after until I took a break to have my two boys. My agent kept telling me to come back. He said if I didn't I might just become another has-been. When the boys were at boarding school I took the plunge and he managed to get me a few bookings before I did some more recording."

Suddenly she was pensive. "I never connected myself with the murder. I had no idea I was connected to this Bronnie Price. I remember reading about captain Ferring and Bronnie Price. The News of the World made out he was a complete monster second only to Cripps. My parents must have realised the connection but they spared me. They were the sort of people who being aware of so much sorrow would have protected me. Anyway, at that time it was not normal to seek out one's birth parents if you were adopted. The

authorities wouldn't help and the general thinking was that it was wrong to seek out natural parents and cause unnecessary distress." Lilly put her glass down firmly on the bar.

"Enough, Julian, we must eat. I will look at the photos in the morning. My brain functions better before eleven although I cannot play or sing a note until after midday."

Lilly said nothing more during the meal and she let Julian prattle on about TV productions and where he was going in the organisation and who he had "worked with". She loved his enthusiasm and delighted in his respectful name dropping. She decided he was a good sort and developed a growing affection for him. At about half past ten she bade him good-night and went up to her room while he stayed at the bar for one more lager.

Of course, she could not resist the temptation to peep into the envelope of photographs. Some were blown up to about six inches by four inches glossy very clear black and white. There were also many smaller colour prints.

They showed the young Ferring. He was on board ships in many of them, in a variety of uniforms some white suits, some shorts with long white socks, one or two in dress uniform with bow tie and white monkey jacket or some in a black reefer jacket with brass buttons, some with beautiful girls and other officers in similar uniforms. They all had gold braid or epaulets. She reckoned his age to be around thirty. Then there were a few on beaches in brief swimming trunks. Sometimes the girls were white and the beaches were Australian. In some the girls were brown and the beaches had the look of Philippines or Malaysia. He seems to have had a good life. How did he finish up in prison? This was my mother's lover. Not my dad surely, she reminded herself.

It had been a mistake to open the envelope just before going to bed. She slept for two hours but woke around one o'clock with a head full of questions about Captain Ferring and her mother and who was her father? Ferring would have claimed her as his daughter and been more affectionate wouldn't he? Who would her father be?

The birth certificate she had used all her life had the names of Suzanna and Isaac Bauman as her parents. She knew they were adoptive and she was not a blood relation to them. She had learnt that her birth mother had been Bronwyn Price from somewhere near Cardiff. Could she find her natural father if not Ferring? She doubted this. Did she need or want to know?

At breakfast Julian was solicitous. "How did you sleep?"

"Not well," she said.

"I feel a bit disloyal, I suppose. The Baumans gave me so much and their lives had been blighted by the war. Suzanna started to suffer lung problems just as we were having our children and she only saw them as babies before she died of cancer. She told me her background - just so I'd know. She and Zak did not deny their Jewishness but they never even mentioned it to me. They didn't associate with the Jewish community, except those living in the house, or go to synagogue. I suppose they saw it as a cross to bear and they passed that on to me by proxy. I did not have any religion

but I marvelled at the music of Handel, Bach, Heinrich Schutz and the rest. I trained in opera though, and prospered with popular classics.

"I opened up a folder of photos last night. This Ferring was a handsome fellow and by all the pictures had a pretty good life until he was caught out. Perhaps I'll see my mother in one. Let's go and give the file some attention."

They found a small reading room which had a table and chairs.

Lilly tipped the contents of the envelope out on to the table and they started to go through it.

"Let's go through the photos and make notes of them," she said.

Two hours later they had looked at all the photos and catalogued them with dates where possible and the names of the people they could identify. To some people they just gave numbers so they could see how often they turned up. In the end it was a pretty good job. She found her mother, Bronnie, named on one or two and was then able to identify her on several more. She was young and pretty, and in

one, next to her is Suzanna, her adoptive mum holding a tiny baby. It was small, black and white picture, probably a contact print from a Brownie camera.

“That must be me. Look how proud she looks. She just adopted her baby. I expect my dad, Zak, took the picture. I must have been six months or a year old. That must be the very day I was adopted. Look, you see the white facade of the Camden Town Hall and the steps. I wonder how Ferring got hold of this. She must have given it to him. It shows he knew her after the adoption, probably not before. I don't think he is my dad.”

Then she came across a packet of colour prints. It was bright with the Kodak logo. The negatives were in a transparent envelope.

“Look at these! They were obviously in love. See all these pictures of them on a yacht, on the beach, skinny dipping. These are the negatives, 35 mm. This is my mum after she had me adopted. Good God it was marvellous. But then they stop. No more! But there is a date on the packet, 12th May 1964. That must

be when I was three but, of course, I'm not with them. She didn't disappear until 1966.

"Let's stop for coffee in the lounge. Then we'll have to check out. I need to get home. I have an appointment this afternoon with a song writer who wants me to hear some stuff," she said.

Julian drove her back to her house in Highgate just in time to meet her musician friend.

The following day Lilly had no engagements. She was pleased her career was slowing down. She had found the last tour tiring and she was no longer sure her fan base was large enough to support her much longer. Her agent, John Davies, had hinted at the decline as she had been having problems with her voice. She had shed tears to start with but then she began to think about being free to roam or write songs or just meet old friends.

The tatty envelope seemed to beckon to her. She had met this Ferring, her mother's lover. He seemed to be sad and there was a mystery to be uncovered. It seems he had been convicted for her mother's death. Murder,

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manslaughter; she could not remember. They had been in love and Captain Ferring seemed to be a human being, a nice man, a man you could imagine being kind and gentle when he wasn't a racy hedonist.

She took out the photos which Julian and she had arranged the day before and spread them out on the large dining table. They formed a history without a key; not quite random but somehow disconnected from the main narrative.

She would have to wait for the great captain to send the rest of the stuff... the words to explain it all.

2 THE CONTENTS OF THE BRIEFCASE

Three weeks after meeting Captain Ferring there was a bang on the door and a delivery man in the brown uniform of UPS handed her a large parcel. Tearing at the cardboard wrapper she found a shabby “Remploy” *faux* leather briefcase.

There was a white envelope attached with a typed letter inside:

Dear Lilly,

It is with some trepidation that I send this to you because it invites judgment which you have hitherto been spared. Your judgment can do me no harm – the harm has already been done.

I told you I wrote a lot in prison. You may find the writing a bit confused. I wrote stuff about her in the first person as if she were addressing me; to bring her back to life. Silly, I know. I wrote a lot of it as an exercise for our creative writing class. The tutor was a

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big fat woman with a very powerful presence and a very determined spirit. Anyway, she made it a condition that anything we wrote would not be read by the prison authorities. It would remain confidential unless it were to be published. She convinced the governor that no one could be creative if they knew the screws would read it. One of the themes that ran through her sessions was "voice". She gave us exercises in changing the voice of the narrator. I was quite keen on her sessions and after a while I became the teacher's pet, almost. You'll find some unrelated exercises in writing in different voices, a vicar's, a copper's, criminal's, battered women's, tortured soldier's and so on.

When I was in jail I had hours upon endless hours to reflect and try to understand many things about my life and how it had led to my imprisonment and I was allowed to write as much as I needed. I don't know if it is any help to you but I wrote and studied in my head all the conversations between

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Bronnie, your mother, and me. It forms a sort of transcript. All these things weren't said at the same time, consecutively but I arranged Bronnie's words into a history. It was cathartic. You must realise that I was in a bad place. I was convinced, by the evidence in the trial, I had been responsible for this person's death; a person of whom I was very fond, in love perhaps. Our paths crossed and I felt also that I could have done more for her if I had not been so mean and selfish; if she had lived. But I had not cared whether she'd lived or not after we parted. I had careered on with my life as if she had just breezed in and out. She was just another passing phase, a diversion. There's an expression 'ships that pass in the night'. All of this I wrote in her 'voice'.

I also wrote up my own early life. This I did in the third person, as reportage, mostly because I felt detached from my past. This was also a kind of exercise. By the time I started this I had a little Amstrad word

processor and saved my stuff on five-inch floppies. They are in the briefcase along with the other media: three and half inch floppies and CDs. And then there were the court cases. I stood apart from these also because I did not accept that it was me in the dock. It was a sort of nonduality. It was happening and I was there but I did not have a rôle nor any control whatsoever. I was an observer and I wrote like an observer. I got over it by distancing myself and I filled in a few gaps in the proceedings with research and fabrication. I had been prison conditioned. Everyone in jail is innocent in their own eyes. It takes a while but sooner or later after you have been in there and talked to all the other lags you begin to believe the whole system is a conspiracy against the underdog.

I suppose in most cases the accused knows either that he did the crime or didn't do it. For my case I was being told I did it but had no recollection, no motive and certainly no need or

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desire for the horrible outcome, but the evidence was there.

Writing up *my* life was *not* cathartic, very much the opposite. My life had been shallow, hedonistic and gross. The more I remembered and wrote the more I hated myself. From being in the outside world, self satisfied and happy and, yes, a good husband and father, striving for the benefit of my family, I began to see myself as a monster. My parents would have been absolutely horrified if they had known what a little shit I had been in my early days at sea. They were spared my final conviction and went to their graves convinced I was innocent.

You see, my life had come together for the twenty or so years after she left it, been killed, and I was acquitted 1972. At the time I convinced myself that I was truly innocent but my life was fractured and finally rent asunder by the "new evidence" which came to light in 1983 and led to my final conviction.

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I wrote Bronnie's story in her voice to try to be true to what she told me and I so much wanted to bring her back to life in those lonely weeks, months and years in prison.

You are so like her to look at. I can only apologise now. Yes, I did steal your mother from you. Who knows what she would have been like now at seventy. She was bright and joyous and I don't think I ever appreciated her to the full. She would still be bright and joyous now. When we were young we macho boys were always moving on. We used up girls. Actually, we also felt they were using us up. Was this the effect of the sixties? Was this the effect of the music, the drugs and booze? It truly was a sexual revolution. It was parties and fun without consequences. But if we'd stopped to think we would have known we should behave like humans, not just pleasure machines.

If I hunt it down I may have a lot of stuff to throw light on our youthful affair, the shocking outcome and the

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tragic end not only of Bronnie, your mother, but of my good friend Oliver whom she married.

As I said, I had a lot of time to reflect while I was in prison. I wrote over and over to try to come to terms with what I had done to her and to my own life by just one crazy error of judgment – that's not harsh enough.

The judge was right, it was absolute negligence. But all the same, if I reveal the facts to you, I want to present them my way. The press has assassinated me in the past and my side of the story has not been heard

I hope that, rather than condemning me out of hand, you can acknowledge that my part in your mother's demise was a terrible accident for which I have also paid a price. I hope also that we can be friends or, at least, not enemies.

Yours sincerely, William Ferring"

4 Cottage Row, Newtown Road,
Warsash, 6th August '15

There was a great mix of media just as he had said. Manila envelopes with crowns or crow's feet, lined paper and then some browning sheet of different sizes.

She started to pull out papers from several of the envelopes just far enough to see titles or the tops of the sheaves inside. She knew about foolscap and quarto but there were also small letter paper and sheets with torn edges, reduced from larger sheets.

Some of the pages were typescript with old fashioned fonts with uneven lines and then some she recognised as dot matrix print.

Where there was no date she guessed at the order by the fonts. The man wrote a lot. Most of it was not going to be relevant to her, she knew, but the whole bundle began to fascinate her.

She opened one envelope containing a handwritten script. This one she took out and read to the end.

Parkhurst Prison May 1989.

Bronnie is dead and I am here. I cannot bring her back but at least I can try to remember our conversations. The shrink I am seeing for my depression says I should write stuff. He says it will help me put my fractured life back into perspective. Writing about Bronnie in this way seems to be both an indulgence and a travesty. I am taking advantage of a dead person to help me live.

Bronnie told me most of the following when we were out on the Westerly often after energetic lovemaking, sunbathing or lying in the vee berth up in the bow. This is as near to a quote of her words as I can get. Writing this brings me tears but sometimes arousal. This is what she told me:

All this coming to England happened because Uncle John would visit our house when Mum and Dad were out. He'd start acting funny. He would ask me to show him my tits. I was so silly as to go ahead. I wouldn't let him touch me. He said lots of girls are proud of their bodies and like to be photographed for magazines and he

showed me one: Playboy. He said they paid a lot of money for the photos and then he came with a camera one day and he wanted me to pose for him. I was fifteen and didn't know what to think. Anyway one day he exposed himself and played with himself in front of me. I knew it was not right and a bit horrible but he promised me money for the photos and said he was sorry about...you know...and he couldn't help himself because I was so beautiful. I called him a silly wanker and a loser.

This uncle kept coming round but he never did it again. The next summer he entered me for the Cardiff beauty pageant. He said he could get me past all the preliminary rounds and get me straight into the contest on the basis of my photos. I wasn't all that keen because I knew some of the photos were topless. To cut a long story short all these men had seen all the photos and they put me up and I won. The prize was two hundred pounds. Councillor Morgan was the chairman of the judges. He gave me half the money right after the presentation,

but he said he'd keep the rest safe so it wouldn't get stolen. It would be in the bank. My uncle stopped dropping in but months later I was summonsed into town by Morgan with various promises of special work but that was when he started to pay unwelcome attention.

That bastard Taffy Morgan, town councillor and friend of my dad's; he really laid it on me. First off he said I was just the sort of girl he could get into the movies. He asked me if I wanted to see "Tiger Bay", you know, the film. Hailey Mills was in it and we went into town and saw it. He told me I was much better looking than Hailey Mills. He started groping me in the back row half way through. I didn't mind that too much but bloody Morgan had a room booked in a dirty little hotel by the docks. We went up there out of the rain. He said it was too late to go home by bus and he didn't offer any alternative. Of course, I was sixteen and thought I was in control. He had bought a bottle of what he called champagne, fizzy and sweet, he carried on which I didn't like much and then he said

he knew about my uncle. “What about my uncle?” He went on to say that he knew my uncle, that’s Dad’s younger brother, was having “fun” with me. Well it was partly true but didn’t amount to anything. It wasn’t long before he wanted the full Monty. I said I was only sixteen. “Oh” he said “you must have lied about your age. If I tell them, you will be disqualified and have to give the prize money back. Have you still got it?” But he said everything would be all right if I was “nice” to him. I said I thought I was too young and we could wait but he told me sixteen was the age of adulthood anyway and what sort of woman would I be if I was frigid at the age when most young women were fully mature and wanted to have experiences. So it happened while I was still at school and then over and over again .Then I realised I was eating out of his hand. The problem was I was enjoying it; more than that, I was needing it and he was playing me like a violin. It was an addiction which I realised was killing me slowly. I went back week after week like a lamb to slaughter. He was a good lover raising me to extreme levels of physical excitement,

like what druggies call a rush. I would day-dream about Wednesday from the previous Friday onwards. I would get all hot in anticipation when I thought of him. It interfered with my school work. He knew how to wind up my pleasure centres like clock spring and I used to leave that scruffy hotel to take the bus back to Ponty with my nerves jangling and my body shaking. He was using condoms but sometimes he would enter me without "just for a feel around". I did not know the danger and so I got pregnant.

He was very angry as if it was my fault. He called me a careless bitch; and didn't I know anything; and why hadn't my mother told me about the pill. Shit, nobody knew about the pill where I came from. He said of course everyone knew: It was in the Daily Mirror.

So he said I had to have an abortion. "It's legal now. Girls can go into hospital and it's all over in a few hours." I was obviously right in the shit. I went to my mother. She was in a pretty bad way with the vodka. She told my dad but he flew

into a rage and said he'd introduced me to these people on trust and I had broken his trust and loyalty and all that crap panicking parents throw at their kids. So he says "Where's the money?" He's after the prize money. It's in my savings account where they put money every year from since I was a baby. Before the prize it had been sixteen pounds and ten shillings, and then it had grown to one hundred and sixteen pounds ten shillings. Morgan had promised the rest of my money for being "good" to him but he took half of the prize money as "agency" for getting me the prize.

Now I'm up the duff and he backs away. But my dad corners him and demands that he pays all the money and more to have me travel to London to get a job. Nobody wants to have anything to do with me. Mum's numbing her head with vodka and pills, scared of Dad. I'm crying and weeping so much I look a complete mess and not eating and I am skinny and my whole body and face are beginning to look old and withered.

When I got to London I went to lodgings they found me, with some friend or relation I never got to meet. London was awful to start with, in Chalk Farm near Camden Town, opposite a big cigarette factory buzzing with motors all the time. I was still not showing much so I walked up the Kentish Town Road asking for work. For some reason a nice lady took me on at Jones and Hagan, a department store. She said I could work in the pen department where they sold Parker Pens and Osmeroid and Schaeffer. I learnt quickly about all the products and then applied my energy to selling, mostly to young men trying to improve their image or young girls wanting to impress a fiancé or boyfriend. The floor walker, Mr. Bauman, was pleased with me because I really sold, but as the baby started to show, the shop manager asked nasty question about my marital status and finally they paid me off. Money was running short but my lodgings were so horrible they were relatively cheap and I worked out that I could just survive until a couple of weeks after my baby was born.

Thank God for the NHS. I went to the City of London Maternity Hospital, Islington, and had a beautiful little girl and I called her Liza after my Gran. How was I to survive? The landlord of my horrible lodgings gave me two weeks' notice. He said the other roomers had complained about the baby and anyway he knew I wasn't married and I should have told him I was pregnant. The baby and I were destitute.

I was on the street a couple of days later when I met Mr. Bauman. He admired baby Liza and he asked me to stop for coffee. He was a nice older man; at least he seemed older though he was really only eight years my senior. He'd lived through the war in Germany. He was sorry I had been sacked and asked how things were. Well, I told him. He said he knew about being hungry and lonely. He bought me a sandwich and some cake. When I told him I was being evicted he paused. "We've got a spare room."

So I went with him to Hampstead that evening and met his wife, Suzanna. She

was very nervous but after they said a few words in a strange language, she smiled a wide beaming smile when she saw the baby. He told me I must call him Zak at home, but Mr Bauman at work: at work! "Of course you may be our lodger. We could do with a little more money, rents are so high here."

The flat consisted of adjoining rooms on the first floor of a grey Victorian building. We and the other tenants shared the bathroom but we had a partition with a front door and three rooms in the front of the house. I was offered the small room; the other two being their bedroom and the living room with a gas ring, a Baby Belling oven and sink at the back. There was a bed and I needed to buy a cot for Liza. I was to pay them one pound a week and some more money for the gas and electricity. This was less than I had paid at Chalk Farm. They told me most of the other tenants in the house were like them - displaced people or refugees. They were survivors with broken up or murdered families. It seems they welcomed the baby. They felt safe in this

shabby house and they existed in the companionship of fellow exiles. My baby was a bit of normality in their disrupted world.

When I moved in he told me that I would not have to pay rent for three months but would have to pay double for the next three. I needed to work. What I did not know was that Zak launched a campaign, slowly implanting the idea of my return to work in the minds of the management of J.& H.

Suzanna became very involved in the care of Liza. She was in danger of smothering the little one in love. On the other hand I was breast-feeding her and was very tired and physically spent. We got on fine. Suzanna would take charge of the baby while I slept. She loved changing the nappies and she never complained about washing them in boiling water, hanging them out, washing Liza's and my clothes but apart from feeding the baby I was growing apart. I found her demands annoying and sometimes her screaming painful to my ears.

I was overjoyed when Zak told me he had secured an interview for me with my old boss. He took me back on because of my past performance as a successful salesperson. Being away at work during the day was a relief and I was sure that Suzanna was taking good care of Liza.

That job lasted me for six months during which time I lost interest in Liza. Suzanna doted on her and when my milk dried up she took to feeding her with the NHS formula and Johnson's baby food. She was so careful and diligent. I could not have been a better mother but I began to feel excluded. They no longer seemed to need me at all and it became obvious that I was growing away from the family. They had each other and Liza had their full attention.

One evening after we had finished our shared meal, prepared, as usual, by Suzanna we moved on to the lounge furniture, Zak in the armchair and us two on the broken old sofa with Liza lying between us dozing. Zak liked a cigarette after supper and he lit up and then I saw

him smile at Suzanna. Then he smiled at me. "Suzy is very fond of Liza. Look how calm Liza is always with Suzanna." I didn't respond immediately.

To cut a long story short we discussed adoption. I agreed and it was all over in two months. We had a brief interview with a social worker and went to the registry office at Camden Town Hall with the magnificent white marble entrance. Liza Price became Liza Bauman and I left for Southampton hoping to get a job on a ship.

They only wanted experienced people on ships so I finished up here in Warsash as a kitchen skivvy. And then I met you. I really fell for you. I had felt addicted to bloody Morgan for the six months but not love. He was screwing me every Wednesday. The pregnancy actually set me free but it was a hard road to that freedom.

Wilfy, you care for me or you seem to. You take me out in the boat, teach me how to sail. We have lovely meals and

picnics. Making love with you is fun as well as physically necessary; as well as a rush.

There was a change of paper to some yellowish lined quarto.

Here I have put together conversations we had on the ship on the homeward voyage mostly in our fatal lovenest, the CO2 locker:

You wouldn't believe how lonely it was after you left to go back to sea. My baby was in London and I wasn't really missing her but I felt guilty that my feelings were so numb towards her. All I could think about were the grand times you and I had together. A lot of it was the physical feeling of you close to me, smiling at me, kissing me, us climaxing together panting and puffing and tiring ourselves out. Well I found one or two of the other boys were quite fun and even if they screwed me it was OK for me but none came near to you. I asked myself why. There was no answer except that you were special and I had fallen in love with you. Gradually I got

used to it. I stopped sleeping around. Too messy and the boys often got too soppy and demanding. Boys I did not really fancy.

Then came Ollie. He was so handsome, boyish yet mature, perhaps the sort of man people might call charming. But actually he seemed civilised, not like Morgan, the ape. He was not big or muscular, not a great sportsman but a great party goer and we went to parties and shows, you know, the theatre or cinema or up to London. He brought excitement back into my life. He was not demanding. Sex was not his big thing, although we stayed in hotels once or twice and cuddled up but he said he was satisfied with, you know, hand jobs and caressing. It was new to me. All the men I'd known couldn't wait to shove it in and shoot their load and a moment after they were thinking of rugby or cars except for you Wilfy. You were always good in what "Cosmo" called "post coital attention". Not just a puff on a cigarette and off to the pub; but you cared how I felt.

Ollie was very affectionate, very considerate and he had his little car. We'd buzz around all over the place, seeing things and doing things and eating in nice restaurants. I didn't care much about the sex. He told me he was a bit unconfident and needed time to get used to me. He said he didn't want to let me down. Finally he managed it and then we had some nice nights in bed but I never thought he was really relaxed and he was never in command, always wanting me to take the lead. It worked out O.K. I think I may have had enough of dominant boys and men telling me what to do and demanding I did what they wanted all the time so it was refreshing to be in charge of what was happening.

He proposed to me just after he passed his masters' exams, I think it was extra masters', because he stayed much longer than the other men. Well, I was very happy. He went to London to the office and heard about his promotion and the ship he was to join. He was sent on a coastal voyage on a ship called "Putra" to horrid places like Hamburg, Antwerp and

Hull. He told me he would be able to take his wife on the deep sea voyage to the Far East. It was all very exciting to be going all over the world to exotic tropical places. He was so relieved when I said yes and he took me back to meet his parents. I could tell they were overjoyed but slightly puzzled. Perhaps they thought I was just a common little Welsh tart. He took a week's leave and we were married in Southampton Town Hall.

Imagine my utter surprise when I saw you. He hadn't mentioned you were on board. Senior cadet Wilfy! I almost ran away. But you behaved very well, congratulating Ollie and me and not even hinting at our past. So I stayed but, of course, complications arose.

Oh Bronnie, Bronnie if only you knew! But of course YOU were the victim.

Lilly was shaking and near to tears when she finished it. The phone rang.

It was Julian: "Where are you?" she asked.

"I am outside your door. You are not answering."

She ran to the door and apologising she offered him coffee and then said she could not possibly go anywhere with him.

"I've started on the stuff Captain Ferring gave us. But the main thing is this," and she handed him the handwritten manuscript.

He speed read it as he sipped on his coffee.

"Well this is very interesting. Yes, it explains a lot. Should make good television, the fact you were rejected by your mother, fathered by some self important town councillor who seduced your mother at a tender age and then had her dispatched to the Smoke to sink or swim. Do you think there's any more that affects you directly?"

"How do I know? It's very sad and very moving. You see the Baumans were my real parents. They formed me into what I am. What I got from the Welsh was pretty good looks and a voice. The Baumans gave me music. They gave me everything except their gaunt appearance and lugubrious outlook on life. I

gave them joy in exchange for their generosity, persistence and forbearance. If I had been in Wales I would have won beauty contests like my mother and, after that, if you're not Miss World you finish up at the till in Tesco like as not. But Suzanna, my darling mother, saw far more than that in me. I am much more than a faded beauty queen thanks to them."

"Shall we try to find out about your grandparents and this Morgan, your natural father, who your mother hated so much?"

"Look, according to this Ferring manuscript, the Welsh side of everything is a disaster. Do we need to see if there is any saving grace; anything which shows they were not so bad. I don't want to go over there to find the whole Price- Morgan lot was a dysfunctional mob? From the reading of this there's a chance they're all losers."

"Do you want me to go through this with you?" he asked.

"Well perhaps you can help, but you have a job to do. I am not sure I want this thing on T.V. unless we find some good things in the

past. You may think it's all very exciting but it's *my* life, *my* origin we're looking at."

"Look, I am working for a producer. He's got to make a program which works. I think your story might work but only if you want it to. My original training is journalism. It's a bit like detectives. I have to run down facts, investigate them, analyse them and then hand them over to the TV guys who build them into a show. This 'Who Do You Think You Are' project only works if the subject really wants it to and is willing to reveal all. My point is: Do you really want to do it?"

She looked over to him with a devastated expression. "Julian, I am not sure. We have a contract don't we? John said this was a job, there's a fee, I suppose. I'm a pro but this is somehow a bit personal. My stock is singing, songs, lyrics and music. Laying bare my private life, my very essence is a bit alarming. I want to have a chance to talk to John about it. What happens if I say no? Does it give you a big problem? Is it a failure on your part?"

"No, no, not at all. I am just a researcher. If there's no story, there's no story. Some other

producer will just send me out to grill some other poor celebrity or dig up some dirt on the government or whatever is the flavour of the day," he said grinning.

"Give me a day or two, after I've spoken to John and had time to think more clearly."

3. WILFY EARLY DAYS

When the two young people had gone Wilfy ruminated on this long and chequered career.

It had all started with great promise. In the summer all he wanted to do was sailing and at the age of fifteen he saved his pocket money and with help from his father bought a wetsuit to extend his season into the winter. He was a very competitive helmsman and had progressed through Mirror dinghies, Toppers and Nationals and was a regular crew, but often single handed helmsman on a small yacht called a Westerly Nimrod owned by his uncle.

The School of Navigation at Warsash beckoned him as he got the idea that he needed to think of a career. In the last two years of school he buckled down and surprised everyone by getting six O level General Certificates and being accepted by Whalley Wakeford, the principal of the college, who saw it as his duty to interview each boy personally.

To Wilfy everything he was taught was magical and easy. The only thing he could not understand was the difficulty some of his fellow cadets had with the subject matter.

Seamanship was all a doddle, he knew all the knots and could splice a rope easily and learnt to eye splice a wire in the time it took his fellows to set it up in the vice. Navigation was an immediate fascination. The intricacies of star and sun sights were simply the theoretical extension of subjects he'd discussed with his uncle who had made sure he knew how to handle a sextant. Seven figure mathematical table became his automatic method of calculation. Cargo work was new and exciting and the descriptions of rice cargoes swelling, timber in logs or boards shifting, minerals in bulk or bags breaking ships in heavy weather, wool in bales, stinking sheepskins and Rolls Royces as top stows had his imagination racing and the calculation of stowage factors and centres of gravity were second nature. Their brief encounter with marine law was a bit of a challenge but he found the commercial geography and shipping history broadened his mind and filled him with expectation. He loved the meteorology as this was also an extension of the sea lore inculcated in him by his uncle

Near the end of the year-long course he applied to several companies avoiding tankers as he had been put off by a pal at the sailing

club who had come back from a six months trip having only been ashore once in Abu Dhabi where, he said, there was nothing but desert, a few camels, unfriendly Arabs and a Missions to Seamen where the strongest drink was tea.

"The officers had spent the day at the Petroleum Club and had come back to the ship pretty happy while we cadets had not even found the tea palatable."

Wilfy was pleased to be summoned to the Foster Timms Steamship Company, in Commercial Road, London E1. He was interviewed by a greasy clerk and then sent up to Captain Flint, the Marine Superintendent, a large, imposing man with bushy eyebrows and a big black eye patch. He only asked one question.

"What makes you want to go to sea, young Ferring?"

Wilfy was in a quandary: should he use a stock answer from his 'How to pass an interview' book? Then he realised he couldn't even remember the stock answer.

"Adventure, Sir, and I like sailing," he blurted.

"Good man. No bullshit about serving your country and the Commonwealth. Right then; work hard, study hard and play to the rules. Go to the second floor and see Mrs. Dinkins through the door marked 'FLEET PERSONNEL' who will start the paperwork for your indentures and so on. You are making a commitment for four years we will make you into a useful officer. Your father will sign the indenture as your sponsor. You'll be assigned to a ship within a month."

His first ship was the "Mystra" and they decided he could join in Aden as his father was working in the Middle East and he wanted to visit him there before joining.

Aden, he was sure must be the hottest place on Earth. He arrived there and was billeted in the Seaman's mission: Flying Angel or just the "Mish". He found that his fellow inmates were all Displaced British Seamen or D.B.S., lead-swingers, enjoying a holiday at the expense of various companies. The Mish provided room and breakfast and they spent

their daily allowance in various bars on Carlsberg and Heineken. The sailors saw a posh little toff just out of school while he saw a bunch of ruffians with strange northern accents. After a couple of days his good humour and the story of his cross country trip though Yemen gained some respect and he softened to the companionship underlying their incessant ribbing. The continuous consumption of beer helped them find a common cause.

A seemingly endless procession of ships called in for bunkers. They would stop for a day and resume their voyages like cars pulling into a petrol station. The crews came ashore for a few hours and bought Japanese electronic goods. It was a bustling place: Akai, Sony, Hitachi, Yamaha and all the other manufacturers were making beautiful reel-to-reel tape recorders, hi-fi record players, watches, clocks, televisions, mopeds, bicycles, sewing machines and a host of domestic goods all for export and all duty free for the nationals of a myriad of different countries. In addition to this trade, was a thriving market in gold and diamonds. Sitting in the shade of a street bar's umbrella in an alcoholic confusion, Wilfy loved watching the ubiquitous goats chewing up the

cardboard cartons as the haggling Yemeni traders unwrapped scandalously over priced goods eventually settling for reductions of between thirty and fifty percent hastening the sailors away with their prized "bargains".

After ten days his ship came in. He was instructed to take a certain taxi boat out to the ship at anchor in the roads. His ten o'clock departure slipped back to one a.m. When he arrived on board, dressed in his white shorts, shirt and white socks and white shoes and brand new stiff white cap, he was greeted at the head of the gangway by the senior cadet.

"Walk on the plank only, look where you're going. The fucking engineers have flooded the deck with heavy fuel. The scuppers are all blocked to stop this shit from going in the water. The water's already black with oil so it won't make much difference. White shoes are not very suitable more like bloody Dunlop sea boots. You're Ferring; is that right?"

Everything was filthy with oil or grease. Wilfy was looking for a place to put his hands.

"Here's a rag just use it to keep your hands clean. By the way I'm Ade. I am the senior

cadet, not that it means much. Just that I've been on this and other rust buckets of the Timms fleet for three and a half years. Where's your trunk?"

Wilfy felt just about secure enough to peer over the bulwark, "Down there in the boat. How do I get it up here?"

"Don't worry I'll get a couple of lascars to bring it up. Lets' get you inside."

The smell of the alleyway struck him immediately: fried food, fuel oil and the more acrid stink of lube oil and the ubiquitous odour of curry: a combination he would get used to and not notice for the rest of his seagoing career.

He was led forward on the port side of the ship. He mentally noted the directions, not being used to large vessels.

"You'll be in here; the others won't be pleased because they were just two but now three in this four berth cabin. It's top bunk for you, my old mate. Dump your bag and come and meet the mate, Uncle Pat, we call him."

As they made their way forward they past several open cabin doors with curtains across. Conversations could be heard inside punctuated with the hissing of beer cans being opened. In some there was music; he recognised Herb Alpert and Cliff Richards and Chief Officer Pat White was playing Thelonius Monk.

"New cadet, Sir," said Adrian Foley as he parted the curtain and entered the room. Wilfy followed.

"Ferring, is it?" said Uncle Pat. "Good, glad you could make it. Terrible trip so far. Storm in the Med, break-down in Suez; I suppose Foley has told you all about that. Anyway welcome, he'll show you around.

"Glad to, sir."

Suddenly, Wilfy felt at home. This Adrian seemed like a big brother, though, in fact, he was smaller and slighter. He had curly fair hair and deep blue eyes and an easy smile.

"By the way, have you had lunch?"

"Well I had a big breakfast, actually, at the Mish. I was in the Blue Angel with a bunch of D.B.S.s"

"Oh God, a right bloody shower they were, I'll bet. Come this way. Do you like curry? They'll be some left even if the cook's wiped down. Bloody good curry today: same every day, really."

"Ade, people call me Wilfy, you know, William Ferring. Those buggers drink a lot of beer. What are they doing in Aden sitting around being kept in beer money by their companies?"

"You ask me. I am told the D.B.S.s are usually idiots who've failed to rejoin their ships in foreign ports. Loafers swinging the lead or else they're facing charges. Not much of an intro' to the British Merchant Navy. Sit down here; this is the cadets' table. Long John will get you something."

Wilfy smiled: "Long John?"

Ade smiled back. "Yes he's very tall for a Goanese, skinny as a rake and walks with a stiff leg. Unusual; and he looks like a pirate-

we think. See you in a few minutes. *Bon appétit.*"

So Wilfy had his first meal aboard. The tall skinny Long John brought him a set of bright nickel silver utensils with the Timms crest on each one and then ceremonially served him, first rice and then a good helping of curry from a nickel silver tureen and then presented him with a condiment dish of chillies, pickles and chutney. Wilfy noted the gold banded plate had the company's crest carefully laid to face him on the white table cloth. The steward had given him a starched table napkin.

Adrian returned and sat down at the table. "How do you like the curry?"

"It's really good, thank you. You eat like this every day?"

"No we have proper meals. Here read this"

Wilfy took the menu card and read:

Consommé de beuf,

Sole meuniere,

Bengal curry with rice and condiments,

THE SECOND OFFICER'S WIFE

Agneau de Bretagne avec legumes et
pommes duchesse,

Plum duff,

Blancmange ou Fruits en saison.

Fromages

"Every day?"

"You can have anything or everything. But let me give you a tip: if you go back on the menu it costs you a case of beer to pour out for everyone."

"Go back?"

"Say you decide you want soup *after* you've had fish - case of beer- a pound of your precious money - a few day's wages for you."

"It's all in French. I can understand most of it, but why?"

"The passengers love it. The food can be really horrible sometimes. Casseroles often contain tripe masquerading as lamb or beef, in thick brown gravy, curry the same but the passengers have to be convinced it's *haut*

cuisine, you know, French. We get loads of rhubarb and stuff called broccoli. No-one eats that shit at home. It's kind of pulped to a green mush. Can't complain: There's meat and there's potatoes, as they say."

"This is called the saloon isn't it? All this panelling and inlay and the furniture and all the linen and the silverware, sure beats the Formica tables and the tubular steel chairs in the mission."

"Not bad is it?" said Adrian with a smile betraying a touch of pride.

"Right we'll go up to the bridge. I have to test the gear with the third mate at two. We're supposed to sail at three. Never happens on time, but we stick to the plan until it stops working."

They went into the foyer and Ade led Wilfy up the oak stairway to the passenger deck and then on to the captain's deck and the bridge. As they passed the captain's door a gruff voice emerged from behind the curtain:

"Hullo there," said the Captain parting the curtain, "Ah Foley, what have you got there?"

"New cadet, sir. Ferring, sir. Joined today."

Wilfy caught the fumes of strong drink as he became aware of the ruddy red-nosed face of his new commander.

"Good afternoon, sir," He said not quite sure what to do with his cap or whether to salute this important gentleman.

"Right you are Felling, yes, welcome on board. Foley will show you the ropes. Sailing in an hour, God willing. Not always the case." The curtain closed and they were left alone staring as if at the end of a performance.

"Oh, he's not bad. It's the mate who runs the ship. The 'Old Man' gets grumpy if the routine is broken or you make a mistake on stations but mostly it's a matter of making him decent cocoa and running his errands. I feel sorry for the Second Officer. He has to visit him at twenty hundred with the ship's nav' report and gets dragged in to drink g. and t. until at least ten. Misses his dinner most nights."

A narrower companionway led up to the wheelhouse. A lean cadaverous man hovered at the top of the stairs.

"Sparks, meet Wilfy, our new recruit." Not smiling, the man, who really did look nearly dead, took Wilfy's outstretched hand in his cold bony grip. Then retreated backwards and closed the door.

"He lives up here. The radio room is here, next door. He doesn't normally go anywhere else. Nothing much normal about him. He has his meals sent up. Only the chief steward knows his name.

"This is the chart room and the wheelhouse. Gets bloody full at stations. Your job will be the Stations Book. It's a continuous log of what happens up here. Every telegraph movement, every helm order, every change of course, buoys or other things we pass noted with the time from that clock - one of our jobs now is to correct that clock. The chronometers tell the time in G.M.T and we keep that one on local time. The time zone is minus three here. I'll sing out the time, you check the clock and give it a wind up for safety."

Wilfy swung open the glass front of the clock and wound it up.

"Not too tight," shouted Ade, "I broke one once. Hell of a stink. Old Man said he'd take the cost out of my wages. O.K. fourteen oh three when I tap on the table."

Wilfy set the clock and looked at the dog-eared book on the little fold down table. He reminded himself that he must use the 24 hour time for all his entries. Ade was back.

"I'll call the engine room now. This is a voice powered phone. These are all war surplus, enormous, awkward and heavy; just two wires inside. Turn this handle and it squawks at the other end. Ade did it and took hold of the heavy receiver.

"Hi, Joe, let's do the telegraph." He pointed to the pedestal with a polished brass head with a round glass window with the legends STOP, DEAD SLOW, SLOW, HALF and FULL in segments and a big handle on top.

He turned to Wilfy. "Grab that handle and swing it to full astern."

There was a mechanical ratcheting as he moved the lever through three quarters of a turn back into the red sector. Then with ding-a-ling the needle behind the glass followed. "Right, now one step at a time turn it to full ahead."

A skinny Indian appeared at the wheel house door. "Atcha, sahib," he said.

"Ah, sukkani. New man here. Number four cadet," said Ade.

"Borth atcha, welcoming, chota sahib," he said with a namaste.

"The sukkani is the helmsman. No autopilot yet, supposed to be coming soon, perhaps never. This man will steer a perfect course and see a ship before anything is above the horizon - before you or I can see it with binoculars. No need for radar while we have these jonnies."

"Right we'll call the engine room to get the steering pump running and test the steering. I say, why don't you do that, Wilfy? Blow on that voice tube marked ENGINE ROOM and ask Joe

to get the steering pump going. We'll go down there afterwards so you can see the set up."

Wilfy took the unfamiliar brass bell-shaped mouth piece and blew into it. It seemed a bit spongy so he blew a second time. He put his ear to it and heard a voice say "engine room".

"Joe?"

"Junior here."

"Start the steering pump, please," he spluttered.

"Who the fuck's that?"

"New cadet, Ferring."

"Right you are, new cadet Ferring," came the amiable reply.

"You have to give him five minutes to get down to the steering flat. He'll call back on the squawker when he's there."

This was all quite puzzling and exciting to Wilfy. Next Ade showed him the stations book. "Always write with indelible pencil. Can't rub out mistakes. Just cross through. Make sure

your pencil is sharp. Here, put the date at the top of the page and hope we get away before midnight. Times down the left hand side events in the middle."

The sound powered telephone squawked. Abe picked it up. "Right." he said "half an hour it is" and he turned to Wilfy. "Not enough steam pressure, wankers! I told them an hour ago."

Another young man in uniform appeared in the wheel house. "Ho, Foley, everything tickety boo? Yes sir. This is Ferring, Wilfy, new cadet, joined here in Aden. Engineers haven't lit the donkey boiler yet. No steering gear; ready in half an hour." Reported Ade. He turned to Wilfy and said: "Third Officer, twelve to four watch. I'm actually on the four to eight with the second. Just helping out today as Brown is still ashore. Just up to the monkey island next.

"We'll take the covers off the compasses and check them. There's the standard compass up there and a gyro repeater."

They went up the vertical ladder on to the roof of the wheelhouse. "This binnacle is for the standard magnetic compass with a

periscope for the helmsman to see it. Light bulb inside; this old man likes us to keep the light on day and night to keep the binnacle dry.

"This is the gyro repeater for taking bearings. You have to shin up the ladder and use this azimuth ring to sight an object. Modern ships have repeaters on the bridge wings - never mind, good exercise.

"You'd better meet the others. We have to call them to be ready for stations but they may have been ashore. Let's go down over the deck."

To Wilfy it was becoming a bit overwhelming.

"This is the boat deck," he said after they had descended two companionways. Wilfy noted the clean bleached teak deck with black caulking and the nicely painted taffrails with the same rounded bleached teak caprails.

"These are the lifeboats. Make sure you know which one you're assigned to. Open wooden boats, oars and sails, and these radial davits which take half an hour to deploy. Better believe we're unsinkable."

They reached the stairway to the main deck. The black oil was being swabbed up by a motley gang of men, some in boiler suits, some in blue shorts and shirts. The handrails on this stairway were simple pipe rails now wiped clean. They entered the accommodation by the port side and went forward to the cadets' cabin.

"Fred, this is Wilfy." Fred was just in his underpants and he was decidedly bleary-eyed. He looked Wilfy up and down.

"How do, mate, that must be your fucking trunk in the study. Welcome aboard. When are we going, Ade?"

"Soon as we can. Pilot's for fifteen hundred. We're testing gear now and just waiting for the wankers to fire up the donkey boiler."

"Ferrgh," expleted Fred and stepped toward his bunk ready to lie down again.

"Where's Tom?"

"Still ashore getting an Akai, silly bugger, as we don't have an inverter to drive it but he

says he'll get one in Hong Kong. Got no music anyway: get that in Taiwan, you know, pirated. Wilfy, your bunk is up there. Shift that suitcase to the other top bunk. Put your stuff in one of the empty wardrobes," he said as he lay down again.

Then Ade indicated they should leave. "You'll have to give the chief steward your documents and he'll sign you on to the articles. The mess boy will make up your bunk. We'll go down to the steering flat now."

The deck was almost clean and the buckets of recovered oil were being poured down the bunkers' vent pipes. The laskars' sea boots were being cleaned with Teepol as they were joking and chatting in Hindi.

To get to the steering flat they had to pass the crew galley with its overpowering stench of deep fried garlic and curry, down through the crew accommodation and a watertight door and down a steel stairway. The place was very hot. An engineer in a once-white boiler suit was fiddling with a motor and an oil can.

"It's going now steam's up. You must be new cadet Ferring. I'm Joe what's your other name?"

"He's Wilfy," said Ade.

"I'm about to call the bridge. I suppose that dosey third mate is up there."

He cranked the phone and reported the steering gear ready. The little motor started making a noise like a car engine and the great tiller on the head of the rudder stock started to move, pushed by a large hydraulic ram.

"That little engine, driven by steam, pumps hydraulic fluid into the ram," shouted Ade above the noise. "Get it?"

Wilfy nodded and looked around. The whole place was new and unfamiliar, the noise was ear-splitting, but the mechanism was simple just like the diagram in the seamanship text book. Ade indicated to go up and out.

As they passed along the alleyway Ade pointed out, "Six to a cabin, one small messroom, eating and washing up on the main deck. We have to go round with the captain

every Sunday to do an inspection when it's all very clean and Bristol fashion."

So it was that Wilfy got his introduction to his life to come.

He was on 'Mystra' for the first eighteen months of his apprenticeship on two voyages back and forth from Hong Kong, Kaohsiung, Malaysia, Japan and a round-the-world trip on the MANZ route broadly a west-about, semi tramping voyage taking in Halifax in Canada, New York, Newport News, Panama, San Francisco, the Pacific Islands of Hawaii, Wellington in New Zealand, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide in Australia, Colombo in Ceylon, Cape Town and Accra.

In his own opinion it was the making of the man from the boy. After the sordid fleshpots of the Far East it was great to meet real girls, who were very impressed by his clean good looks and uniform and by his nice manners. By the time he arrived in Cape Town for two day fuelling stop it had all gone to his head and as God's gift to women he was immediately entertained by a powerful blond called Karla who he met at the Flying Angel Mission and

who managed to exhaust him in his two nights ashore. He was pleased when the ship let go for the trip northward. At anchor in Accra there was no shore-leave. The vessel was anchored a mile and a half offshore and the cargo was all carried out to the ship in surfboats crewed by eight or ten muscular black tribesmen. Ten huge teak logs, about twenty feet long and six feet in diameter were floated out alongside the ship and parbuckled on board; last thing loaded on the side decks. There was no rest for the officers or the cadets and anyway it was thought dangerous for young boys to go in to town.

Loaded 'down to the marks' the 'Mystra' arrived in London in the spring of 1965 and Wilfy was sent down to Warsash, near Southampton, for the so-called Mid Apprenticeship Release course. This was a very enlightened idea designed to keep the young chaps keen and give them a fair taste of the education on offer to the rest of the British youth enjoying the enormous expansion of University and Polytechnic places.

Wilfy was near his home and near his familiar sailing grounds. He was almost in

heaven but his recent voyages had given him an appetite for affairs of the heart and animal lust. It wasn't long before he hitched up with a so called 'kitchen wench', Bronnie. She was exceptionally pretty with blonde hair and bright glassy blue eyes and a musical Welsh accent which differentiated her from the other girls who spoke with the local Solent vowels.

She was a needful and an enthusiastic lover and he fell head over heels for her. The summer was coming on fast and he took her sailing and on his uncle's Westerly yacht they made passages to anchorages and harbours in the Solent and the Isle of Wight, making the best possible use of the wide double berth in the main cabin below. For Bronnie it was the best time ever with a boy who she felt cared, enjoying her company and making love often and long.

She also loved to be taught the basics of sailing and simple navigation as they explored special anchorages around the Island. As the light began to fail they might go ashore in the little inflatable to pubs frequented by the yachting crowd.

As all good things do, it came to an end when Wilfy was called away to sea on the day after the end of the second term. They wrote a couple of times each but found they had little to write about so the correspondence waned. Wilfy had been assigned to a passenger ship out of Southampton to Australia making a double header from Sydney, where he picked up his old acquaintance with Brenda who enthused about how much she preferred English men to the Australian variety. He realised that opening doors for a girl or pulling out her chair was sure to impress, although he might not be able to compete in blond muscularity with the surfers of Bondi Beach.

The first cruise of the double was to New Zealand and the second was much more interesting to Japan for the Cherry blossom. Brenda was waiting on the quay after each short trip. Brenda was a real athlete and Wilfy found her perfect body to be superbly stimulating. She was very demanding and sex became somewhat competitive. It seemed the trip was all over far too soon when he sailed away back home. From the arrival at Southampton they did a very quick turnaround and went on a Mediterranean Cruise. On their

return, leaving Bronnie to her own devices, Wilfy took a month's leave with a mixed bunch of male friends in the Cairngorms to get as far away as possible from the sea and into beautiful scenery and greenery. It was a kind of all male outward bound trip, camping, hiking and drinking local ale.

When he arrived back at his parents' house in Hampshire, he tried to call Bronnie at her digs and got no reply. He thought nothing of it. Water had passed under the bridge.

Then he reported back to London and was summoned to the Personnel Officer for his next assignment.

4. CAPTAIN RORY GORDON

It was a very fine day in the Indian Ocean. The vessel was rolling gently and a light smoke was rising from the funnel. The master had risen from his armchair where he had been snoozing off his lunch and several large whiskies to make his afternoon perambulations around the accommodation block on the deck reserved for the passengers and himself. Two things affected his choice of timing. The first was his knowledge that the passengers would not be roused from their post prandial slumber until 1600 and the second was that the Second Officer's wife would appear at around 1500 to sunbathe on number three hatch.

A man of sixty, whose relationship with women had been stunted by forty five years at sea it was natural that he would gain a vicarious pleasure from the sight of this slender young woman wearing a very revealing bikini. He had meant, from the first day he saw her there to admonish the Second Officer to restrain his spouse and have her wear a more modest costume but as the days went by his

resolve was tempered by the diversion he derived from the view. He was not a natural peeping tom and he would have glowed red with embarrassment if anyone had called him out on his daily voyeurism.

So it was with this captain of the good ship "m.s.Mystra" of the Foster Timms Steamship Company of Leadenhall Street, London EC3. His nerves had stopped jangling after the sweltering Red Sea passage and the disaster of Aden where he had just managed to avoid a major fine for dropping heavy oil in the harbour. He had been obliged to confront the surly Chief Engineer, a mouthy Scouser with a reason and excuse for everything. Fortunately the agent had greased the relevant palms with alacrity; a job he did on a daily basis. The main deck had been awash with the black stuff and Captain Gordon had been obliged to forego his trip into town to meet his good friend Captain Hemhurst of the "m.s.Pankah" voyaging in the opposite direction on the homeward leg.

He would be brought his tea at four o'clock and would have his first dram to enrich the flavour of the best Darjeeling brought by the steward on a tray with homemade biscuits and

a jam sandwich. He would then confine himself to his suite while the passengers would wander around his elevated deck and the boat deck below.

Sometimes he would wonder how he had ever got himself into this benign prison. Life was pleasant enough and he was not a gregarious man. He stood on his rank and supposed that fraternising too much with the other officers would undermine his authority. His aloofness engendered a certain fear in the cadets, contempt in the Third and Fourth Officers and sympathy in the Second Officer and a mild disdain from the Chief Officer who was similarly under employed and alcoholic.

Essentially the officers were all sahibs; post colonial colonials. They had all the arrogance of their forebears but, thank goodness, none of the power. They wore the correct uniform of the day. In the Indian Ocean it was the white shoes and long white socks, white, starched shorts and shirts with the epaulets of rank on their shoulders. They referred to each other by rank rather than by name when in company and deferred religiously to the hierarchical system.

Of course to the captain, the master, of the ship this was subliminal and *de rigueur*. No one would be allowed to slack. He would send messages down to the Chief Officer if he saw a cadet with white socks at his ankles and his worst hate was engineers in uniform with three shirt buttons open or wearing black shoes with their whites. Notes from him were ignored in good humour by the Second Engineer.

As his fantasies about the young woman ameliorated and he had finished tea and "dram" he ruminated on how he had started out on this solitary life. His first experience of seafaring was during the great depression. It was to escape the awful poverty of Glasgow and then London that he had made his way down to the Gravesend marshes to join his first ship, replacing the ship's boy who had been washed overboard while trying to secure a loose grab bucket in a storm in the estuary. It was a collier running from Newcastle around the coast to various ports sometimes as far as Falmouth. He had learnt all his practical seamanship on the deck of the two thousand ton, triple expansion engined, "s.s. Fair Flower". His good basic education and savings from three years on this horrible trade allowed

him to study for his First Mates' Certificate (home trade). It was only a matter of time before he obtained his masters' and his command of a similar vessel plying the same routes.

It was the Second World War which had catapulted his career and nearly killed him at the same time. A twenty one day spell at the North Shields Nautical School allowed him to convert his Home Trade Certificate to Ocean Going. He was immediately recruited to take charge of a ten thousand ton general cargo Liberty ship plying the North Atlantic.

He did not hanker for the old days. The wartime ships were slow and under attack. The accommodation was crude: not that it mattered as they had no time for recreation. The ships were always undermanned, the weather was usually awful and the pressure to maintain station in convoys unrelenting. He had been sunk twice, the second time from a tanker surviving by a miracle before being posted to India where he ran a regular service between Chittagong, Madras, Ceylon, Bombay, Karachi and Suez master of a passenger and cargo ship overloaded with troops and *materiel*, or

medical evacuees and salvaged metal and timber.

When the war was over he joined the ranks of the unemployed officers reporting regularly to Dock Street, London E1 to sign in for potential work. As the rebuilding and repair of merchant ships progressed in the next few years many of his fellows were engaged again. He had to wait until in 1948 when his name was called and he was taken on as Second Officer with the Foster Timms Steamship Company on one of their new motor ships. Around nine thousand tons she had a Doxford diesel engine and a top speed of fourteen knots on trials. Several of the eight ships of this type were to be where he worked for the next fifteen years plodding back and forth from London and European ports to India, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaya, Hong Kong and Japan rising through the ranks quickly as the supply of ships outstripped the number of experienced officers available.

5. BRONNIE'S FATAL VOYAGE (July 67)

Senior cadet "Wilfy" William Ferring was staring backwards over the bridge wing

towards number 3 hatch. The Second Officer, Oliver Watkins was busy in the chartroom working up the star sights for the ship's evening position. Oliver was conscientious and serious when doing the navigation calculations in contrast to his usual jocular attitude. The cadets loved him as he had a giggly sense of humour and easily forgave their errors and mistakes. He would invite them to pour-outs and allow them gin and tonic not normally allowed to cadets. The object of Wilfy's gaze was his mentor's wife. A handsome lusty lad of twenty, his imagination ran wild whenever he neglected his duty as lookout to reverse the direction of his gaze. There was also history.

She provoked fantasy, either in ignorance of what she was doing or on purpose to gain some advantage in the all-male shipboard environment. It was in was in the era of the bikini, microkini and the backless and almost frontless swimsuit; the middle sixties. Bronnie, having been obliged to spend the siesta period with her husband Ollie, would repair to the hatch-top with her brightly coloured beach towel at four o'clock when he took over the watch accompanied by his easily distracted senior cadet.

The *sukkani* would keep a good lookout reporting anything he saw to the cadet who would pass it on to the second officer. In the middle of the Indian Ocean between Durban and the Malacca Strait the chance of their cargo ship sighting another vessel or anything interesting more than once a day would be unusual. The chain of command allowed the cadet free to indulge his lusty fantasies at the same time appear to be alert.

Their vessel was a general cargo ship, "Putra", of about fourteen thousand registered tons, one of seven similar ships of the Foster Timms line of London. She was built in 1947 when Britain was furiously trying to replace her losses of the Second World War. She was one hundred percent British of riveted construction built to the so called Isherwood pattern of five cargo hatches, accommodation amidships including six luxurious passenger cabins under the bridge, powered by a six cylinder Doxford engine situated behind hold number three. The master of the vessel, a lonely, dour, alcoholic Scotsman, Captain Gordon, had survived two sinkings of his commands in the North Atlantic and now

commanded the "Putra's" crew of some fifty five men.

On the second day out of Durban as the tropical heat of the Indian Ocean began to relax the deck officers, Wilfy was caught unawares as Bronnie stood up elegantly and looking directly at him smiled broadly and waved as she swirled her towel around her, walking forward to the accommodation door. He blushed profusely but was relieved to know she had not been able to see his discomfort as she negotiated the high sill of the doorway.

Turning his mind to other things he entered the wheelhouse and popped his head round the chartroom door "Just going to take an azimuth, sir," he told the officer of the watch. This had to be done every four hour watch to check the gyro compass and shortly before sunset was the best time.

"Just before you do, Ferring... I seem to have brought up an empty pack of cigs. Could you, please, go down to the cabin and you'll find a carton on the right hand side of my desk."

"Yes, sir." Wilfy's pulse raced as he realized what he was about to encounter. His heart was not wrong. When he arrived and knocked respectfully on the curtained door frame there was no answer so he peeped into the room and seeing no-one entered and made for the desk. The sound of a door closing behind him made him turn.

"Oh, it's you. What do..." she paused, "what a nice surprise. I was thinking about you." She was holding the towel against her chest and had obviously not finished drying herself. Her hand moved and he glimpsed the areola of her left breast.

"Cigarettes," he blurted. "Ollie, I mean the Second Officer needs a new packet... On the desk."

"Interesting," she mused, "you here and Ollie up there," she smiled broadly and let the towel slip so he could see the whole of her shapely chest. She did not block his exit but he had to pass her on the way out.

"I didn't mean to disturb you." He spluttered as he approached the door.

"Perhaps we could....no, no. He needs his smokes. Wilfy aren't you interested in me anymore?"

"Shit, Bronnie, you're married to Ollie. I left you and we never really kept in touch. Ollie's great. Don't cause trouble. That would be a real bitch."

"OK, bye bye, Wilfy. Go now."

He returned to the bridge and the second mate offered him a cigarette from the pack. They went out on the bridge wing, dismissing the *sukkani* to get a cup of *char*, and they smoked companionably, conforming to the rule of 'no smoking in the wheel house'. Wilfy tried not to betray his excitement so he asked a distracting question: "What do you think about this rumour of electronic navigation by satellite?"

"I guess it may happen for us one day. I've read some articles about it. The U.S. Navy and probably the Russians are using it now in conjunction with inertia navigation to position their submarines but it is slow and laborious. I don't suppose we'll have it for a long time yet."

When the cigarettes were smoked Wilfy climbed on to the roof of the wheelhouse, the "monkey island", to sight the sun for an azimuth check on the gyro compass and the magnetic standard compass.

Their next task was to take a series of star sights as the sun dipped below the horizon and dusk allowed the second mate to see both the stars and the horizon to measure their altitude with the sextant. The cadet marked the time of each sighting using the chronometer. Wilfy lost concentration several times as his memory could not rid itself of the encounter with his mentor's wife.

He had to guess some of the times several seconds after Ollie had called "mark". Two of the position lines were two miles away but the rest were acceptable. Wilfy knew that the ship's position was fudged. Ollie said nothing but he was obviously not happy. It was the age old problem the officer had to rely on a cadet to get a good time and cadets were regularly unreliable. Fudging the evening position was not satisfying for the second officer who prided himself on his competence as a good navigator, but necessary and not at all dangerous as the

ship could be steered accurately for days across a flat ocean with little or no cross current to worry about.

The following morning, as usual, at around six o'clock Wilfy left the bridge to do his "rounds". This was his favourite part of the watch. First he went to the main deck and walked forward to the foc'sle right in the bow. He checked the paint locker, and up on to the deck above to make sure all the anchoring equipment was properly secure. Here he loved to stop for a while. He could hear the gently hissing and splashing of the bow wave, a muted vibration of the engine and the slow rolling motion of the deck. The 'eyes' of the ship, so called because of the two hawseholes of former wooden vessels, is somewhat romantic but on an Indian ocean night steadily making way towards the Orient, 'eyes' is apposite.

Returning down the port side of the deck he had to pass the second and third officer's staterooms. The light was on in the second's cabin and he glanced in. She was there at the window which was open pulled part way down. She wore Ollie's Hongkong brocade dressing

gown slightly open to reveal the top of a pink negligee across her undulating chest. She spoke in a stage whisper. "Come round."

As soon as he was in the doorway she embraced him and kissed him with enormous energy. A kiss as powerful as he had ever experienced with her before. The brocade had opened up completely and through his white tropical shirt he could feel the warmth of her body. His pleasure was tinged with reluctance. He took in a breath of her clean shampoo scent and pulled away.

"I must...."

"Why did you come down then?" she demanded with a pout before he could finish his sentence.

"My job."

"We have a lot to remember, Wilfy."

"What about Oliver?" he said the name for the first time. Oliver his future cuckold; or should it be *her* cuckold?

He pushed her away and stood up to his full six foot putting his face out of her reach. He turned with a military click of the heels and walked away down the alleyway. His next stop was the crew galley to check that the cook was up and frying his great pans of garlic and vegetable. He walked past the cramped hell's kitchen and leant over the stern for a few minutes to contemplate the bubbling wake, cursing the stickiness of the ghee condensed on the blackened steel rail.

Next he marched forward to the midships galley where the Goanese night cook would have bacon and egg sandwiches ready for him and Ollie. He didn't have much time until the morning star sights so he briefly said, "Good morning, Lawrence, thanks for the sarnies," before leaping up the stairway two at a time to the bridge, with their pre-breakfast snack.

She was beginning to dominate his thoughts constantly, but he made a tremendous effort to make a good job of assisting Oliver with the morning sights.

They met again on the deck near the hatch where she was in the habit of sunbathing. It

was around 1130 and she was dressed in a bright summer dress and blue plimsoles with white socks. Her blond wavy hair was blowing freely in the breeze as she leant on the scrubbed teak rail near the hatch of number three hold. Wilfy had been dozing in the small slot of a study set aside for the cadets to prepare for their second mates' exams. It was his usual routine to do some reading or test questions until his eyes closed and he put his books away and went out into the sunshine to fend off fatigue. He sauntered over to her side. She turned and smiled widely.

"Hello handsome," she joked.

"Hi," he said rather flatly.

"I've been thinking. We must find a place."

"What do you mean a place?" he asked rather sternly.

"You know, somewhere we can be together, private. You share your room with Jones and I don't think you should be seen coming and going from Oliver's cabin, so how are we to get together?"

“What about Ollie?” he repeated.

“He’s completely lost interest. I can’t even get him excited for a moment. He was never great in bed but at least he made some sort of effort. Now he just turns over and snores when we go to bed. I don’t think the gin helps; just knocks him out. I am beginning to think he’s one of those, you know..... homos.”

It was with a mix of triumph and alarm that Wilfy realized he had been right. Ollie was failing in the nuptial department and here she was asking for him to be a knight in shining armour or *amour*. How could he betray his friend and mentor with this girl he’d known so intimately but had dismissed in the last two years?

She continued wistfully: “You were my favourite; the nicest of the bunch at Warsash but I thought Ollie was even nicer. He was such fun, always laughing, always respectful and I can see it now; he built me up. He made me feel so good, no longer a little Welsh skivvy. He made me laugh and I fell in love, more in love than with the others. The others were all fun and you especially but like the rest you had

to go back to sea and leave me there. He took me home to his parents' and they seemed to like me because of my Welsh way of speaking. They thought I was cute, and I was always on my best behaviour. We only slept together a few times before we got married. He said he enjoyed it but he held back. He was very nervous. He didn't make any demands; in fact I had to lead him on. I thought it was just nerves as he loved me so much. I didn't tell him about the others. I don't know whether he knew what sort of girl I had been and I wanted to change all that I really, really wanted a steady man and he was so kind and funny and considerate.

"He had an MG Midget, not a very good one. It rattled a lot and the roof leaked in the rain but it was fun in the sunshine with the roof rolled down.

"Well, he wanted me to be with him on this first voyage when his seniority allowed him to take his wife, so we married. It was so exciting and I was beginning to think my life was really coming to something. But, Wilfy, I really think he isn't up to it, you know, on the physical side, and seeing you here has reminded me of those weekends when we didn't seem to stop, you

know, except to steer the boat around the Isle of Wight. I have never come like that again and again since then. If I'm shocking you, I can't help it because it's true. I suppose the truth is I *am* just a little slut but you made me feel like a real woman, not on a pedestal like with Ollie but just like a real woman with a real man."

Wilfy had been listening to every word. Surprise, excitement and reluctance were rolled into one confusing emotion.

"Right," he said remembering what he had seen in the CO2 room. He had spied in there a piece of foam rubber like a mattress without a cover. "I have a present for you, something to lie on when you sunbathe."

"That's nice. The hatch cover is a bit hard with just a towel on the canvas." But she had guessed there was a bit more to his offer and grinned conspiratorially.

"You see this steel door," he said as he opened a door next to the entrance to the passenger deck, "It's marked CO2 and there is a rubber mattress in here. It is important you start to use it every day," he said as he handed it to her. "When you sunbathe spread your

beach towel on it, you know. Make yourself comfortable. Put it back in this locker. It's quite clean in here and there is plenty of space." Wilfy explained CO2 is used as a fire extinguishant on ships and industrial spaces. Being inert, it kills fires by excluding the oxygen, asphyxiating the fire. "There is space for more than twice as many cylinders for the cargo holds. Only the ones for the engine room were installed so there's plenty of space. See the release valves and pipes leading to the various parts of the engine room. They're remotely operated so no one ever comes here."

"You mean that will be our "place"?"

"We'll see." he said. "At twenty hundred Oliver reports to the captain who hauls him in for drinks. I'll be here at this locker, say, soon after eight. If anyone catches you say you think you lost your bracelet when you put the mattress away. Get it?"

This squalid little arrangement worked on most days and at night when she would sneak up to meet him on his "rounds", until they approached the Channel on their way back to London on a September day in 1965. Of course,

to them, it was not squalid but an exciting tryst as their lovemaking nearly returned to the adventurous coupling they had developed on the Westerly. Their meetings became regular like clockwork. Oliver was oblivious to what was going on and the relationship between the Second Officer and the cadet continued in the manner of good shipmates; mentor and mentee. Wilfy began to feel that Oliver must have guessed and, perhaps, had determined to keep his head deep in the proverbial sand. During the latter part of the voyage he was sometimes almost affectionate, but at other times moody and tetchy but he always showed the nicest of manners, professionally, and took trouble to ensure he instructed Wilfy in navigation and small points of seamanship.

Wilfy truly liked this man. He enjoyed his infectious laughter and his sympathy. On the wing of the bridge under the brilliant starry sky, when they smoked a couple of cigarettes together Ollie would talk about art and books he had read with an endearing sensitivity that Wilfy had not come across with other officers. He spoke of his mum and his brother and his sister's horse, bringing it all alive. He loved his MG in spite of its faults and frequent

breakdowns. Of all his favourite things he did not mention Bronnie.

Wilfy was beginning to understand why Bronnie had been attracted to him and become very fond of him and even why she had fallen in love with him. For the first time in his life he appreciated that relationships could get complex, not just simply a matter of 'will you or won't you'. Was he getting too fond of this man he was cheating? He felt the need to rationalise. He had no sense of guilt, in fact he saw himself as saving Bronnie's sanity *and* doing Ollie a favour. Wilfy was typical of his age; deep down he thought he was, if not God's gift, at least a manly gift to any woman with needs.

'Putra' had made her way through the Suez Canal and across the Mediterranean. They stopped for a day at Naples and the Chief Officer arranged with the Agent for the cadets to go on an educational visit to Pompeii. Wilfy suggested to Bronnie that she tag along. They all piled into a minibus with a tour guide and a packed lunch.

They had a fantastic day out and marvelled at all the extraordinary discoveries. Of course, Wilfy and Bronnie stuck together and managed not to hold hands or make their attachment too obvious to the junior cadets.

“Thank God we got off that bloody ship.” Bronnie said in a quiet moment over their sandwiches. “living in that little box with Ollie is making me mad with claustrophobia. You are the only good thing about this whole miserable trip. But let’s enjoy the day! By the way no more trysts this week Ollie has found some new life and wants to make love to me every time he comes off watch. I think he may be suspicious and wants to make amends.”

As usual it was cold and foggy in the English Channel and their little escapes to the CO2 locker stopped. Bridge watches were much more of a job of work with coastal navigation and long hours deciphering smudgy echoes on the primitive radar. Night time rounds were dispensed with and anyway the idea of the uncomfortable locker was not appealing.

Arrival in London was chaos. Bronnie had decided that she would not go with Ollie to his parents' house in Hampshire. His ardour had been short-lived and she would go to her mother in Wales. Wilfy made a plan to meet her in Town where he would take her to a Soho restaurant and on to a show and then on to a hotel. This cheered her up from the sense of failure and hopelessness about her marriage.

At the berth in the King George the Fifth Dock there was an urgent message for him to go directly to the office. "A taxi will be at the dock at 1430 to take you to the office and then directly to the airport to fly to Japan to join a newly built ship." He had heard on the grapevine that one of three new ships had been finished a month early and was to sail in five days for a cargo in Hong Kong. "Your luggage will be air-freighted for you. Take an overnight bag. You will be provided with safety clothing by the yard in Yokohama. The Second Officer, Ollie, had received a posting to a ship in Liverpool but was to be free for a few days. All their immediate intentions had been blown away. Wilfy was to share the taxi with the Captain to go to the office.

He met Bronnie in the foyer outside the second mate's cabin. He told her about the command to go to the office.

"Oh, I'm going up on deck. Too much happening here." She winked as she said it. "Ollie's met a friend and is going to London with him. I'll probably go to Cardiff tomorrow after our night out."

He followed her up the companionway and they stood looking at each other on the open deck.

"He's got his friend down there: Adrian? I'm sure he's, you know, a fairy. He's very young looking. I've not heard Ollie talk so much the whole trip. He can't stop smiling and joking. Anyway they're going off soon and planning a great night out. He's written his handover notes and the Third Officer is being promoted to his job which makes it even simpler. I don't suppose I'll see him again. Good riddance, I say."

Wilfy was full of emotion. "Look, our plans are all awry. I have to go in a taxi at half past two, straight to the office with the captain; possibly off to Japan tonight."

Her face crinkled just a smidgen, "Come," she said grabbing his hand, "We'll make love one more time. We may never see each other again. We'll keep in touch and you can come and find me some day, but who knows when?"

So they had entered that fatal room with the soft mattress. A ship's passenger bath towel had found it way there halfway through the homeward voyage.

Their clothes were off and they were in each other's arms and in a trice. The towel was clean and the place was warmed by the heat of the engine room.

The space was lit by a single light bulb high in the deck head. They had never bothered to switch it on or off as they were in a very private place where no-one would bother them and the weak illumination had become part of the atmosphere.

They were fully occupied with their loving when the bulb went out leaving them in complete and absolute darkness at the same time the ship went silent. At first it had no effect on the business in hand but as they became more aware of the world beyond their

physical sensations they began to be concerned.

“What do we do now?” she whispered.

“Don’t worry,” he said, “I’ll find the switch. He pulled on his pants and trousers, fastened his shirt, slipped his feet into his casual shoes and felt along the bulkhead. “Got it.” he said, as he twisted it but there was no effect. The light was dead.

“Oh my God; I can’t get dressed in this darkness. I can’t see a thing. My clothes are all over the place.”

The door was sealed and gas tight so not one lumen of daylight could enter.

“It’s OK.” Wilfy said reassuringly. “I can get a torch. Stay here.” He ordered unnecessarily.

He opened the door glancing back to where she stood holding the towel to hide her nudity. As he stepped out his heart dropped to his feet. Approaching were the chief officer and a senior customs rummage officer in navy blue dungarees. Wilfy closed the door gently.

"Everything all right, Ferring?" asked the ships officer assuming his senior cadet was doing some sort of routine check of the CO2 room.

"Fine, sir, just a last checking of the pressures I should have done three days ago."

Wilfy stepped aside and horror of horrors he witnessed the Chief Officer snap the padlock on the door and the customs officer put a band with a metal seal through the same hasp.

Inside Bronnie heard nothing more after the door closed. The darkness was absolute and the silence was eerie as the noises of the ship's machinery had stopped. Perhaps that's why the lights went out! There was a faint hissing, almost imperceptible, but ominous. She thought it might be gas but there was no tell-tale smell. Suddenly she was very frightened, not understanding the workings of this great steel machine in which she was incarcerated. She tried to convince herself that Wilfy would be back. He loved her and cared for her after all. He would be back. She searched around on the steel floor of the

compartment and bit by bit she found her clothes and with time on her side she started to put them back on. Her panties were wrapped up in the towel; her tight-fitting pink slacks were inside out, her bra was tangled with something but she managed to release it. Her little white bobby-sox were the last things to be found but her slip-on shoes were nowhere. She had dressed herself standing in one spot, too scared to move in case she touched something setting off the gas cylinders.

Whenever they had used this space she had noticed her pulse rate had quickened giving her a higher sense of arousal. Their couplings had lasted fifteen minutes at the most and except for a few close shaves they had escaped this room without incident. She was dressed and had nothing more to do so her fear became her only emotion. She decided to find the door and try to escape or raise the alarm. Her search for her clothes had completely disorientated her. Her sense of direction was nullified.

The room had been designed for a maximum number of 64 large cylinders but the actual installation was only 24 all

interconnected with pipes; enough to protect only the engine room but none of the cargo holds. A trunking for the gas pipes about two feet square led down two decks being sealed at the bottom with glands as the pipes passed through.

She found the smooth wall of the room and with her hands flat against it made her way slowly in the direction she thought was towards the door. By this time she was panting fast and beginning to feel exhausted. As her foot hit the low sill of the descending trunkway she lost her balance finding nothing except the rubber mattress to steady her. Only just conscious she slumped into the wide open void hitting the back of her head on the sharp edge and her forehead on the pipes opposite, dragging with her the towel and the spontex mattress which lodged above her. The descent was through at least sixteen feet and the pit was full of poisonous carbon dioxide. She was unconscious before she landed at the bottom and dead a few minutes later.

Wilfy knew the spare key was on the emergency keyboard. He collected the torch from his cabin and got the key and was making

his way up to the next deck when he was called by his cabin mate, Jones.

“Wilfy, you jammy bugger. Your cab’s here. They’re going to take you to head office for a briefing before you go to Japan. The Captain is in the cab waiting. Get your arse down there or he’ll leave you behind.”

“Right.” said Wilfy. “Do me a favour. Take this key, open the CO2 locker and let Bronnie out. That’s all. Ask no questions.”

“Oh shit, so you really were...*very* lucky man.”

“Yes, do it now. And explain to her that I had to rush. She’ll understand. We’ve said our good-byes, and give her a kiss from me.”

When Jones reached the door he was confused to find it not only locked but sealed with a customs seal. He knew these seals could be broken and then made to look as if they were still intact so he applied his seaman’s knife to it and opened the door fully to let the daylight flood in. He entered the room. He looked around, seeing nothing except the rows of cylinders he called out “Bronnie” a couple of

times and then assumed she had been let out by the customs men in their search. He relocked the door, reset the tampered seal and left to replace the key on the emergency keyboard.

6. OLLIE ON TRIAL FOR GROSS INDECENCY

Adrian had come aboard soon after the vessel had docked. He had gone straight to see Ollie who was absolutely ebullient. He met Bronnie in the cabin and was obviously surprised that Ollie was married. Bronnie, who saw how animated Ollie had become on meeting Adrian, decided she would leave. She had a train ticket to Cardiff, had arranged for her large suitcase to be sent by British Road Services and was ready to travel.

She gave Ollie a peck on the cheek, smiled at Adrian and left the room. As she crossed the vestibule she met Wilfy and they disappeared up to the boat deck.

The door of Ollie's stateroom remained shut for about an hour. Ollie and Adrian emerged went down the gangway and left the dock in Adrian's Mini. They went up to Frith Street in Soho to a famous Chinese restaurant called the Chan Dynasty. There they met some more chums there and their lunch lasted until about half past three. The excited

conversation had included the new surfing movie called 'The Endless Summer' and Adrian suggested they go to see it. Ollie was dopy with all the food and rice wine and would have gone anywhere with Adrian.

The film was showing at a small cinema in Tooting. So they drove off down there and enjoyed the wonderful photography and the rhythmic "surf" music of the Sandals along with the beautiful physiques of the surfers as they sped through the waves. They went to the Admiral Rodney, a known 'queer' pub nearby for a few drinks and a steak sandwich. Their animated conversation caught the attention of a good looking young man who joined in enthusiastically about the film and the 'London Scene' as he liked to call it. It had been Ollie's plan to kip on the sofa of Adrian's flat in Brixton. It was not long before the conversation turned to sex and how the new bill when enacted later in July would liberate 'gay' people as they now liked to be known. Sebastian, or Baz, suggested they make a threesome and go to someone's place for a bit of 'fun'.

"Let's take a bottle from here and go."

"I am sorry but my sister is in tonight and we cannot go to my flat," apologised Adrian.

"Never mind," said Baz, "there's a little hotel just round the corner, clean but not expensive. Why don't we go there?"

So at around ten thirty they left the pub and Ollie checked into the Bright Star Hotel. The receptionist did not ask any questions, simply demanded payment up front and a ten pound deposit to be refunded on departure. The other two came in a few minutes later and they all went up the stairs.

They sat around rather subdued at first drinking wine and then vodka which Baz had ordered across the bar but Ollie had paid for. It was a warm night and Baz took off his shirt and then started undressing Ollie who was lying with head in Adrian's lap. Soon they were naked except for Baz who kept his trousers on. They both loved him and kissed him for his very boyish and happy face. Ollie and Adrian both thought he was beautiful but they also admired each other. Soon they got down to the serious stuff. Baz said he would join in later but he didn't want to come between the two

obvious lovers. He then produced a Minox 9.5 millimeter camera and started to take pictures.

When Adrian protested Baz said, "You'll love these. I can get them developed and printed by a very discrete guy who will blow them up to eight by five and you can keep them as a memento."

Suddenly Adrian snapped to his senses. He saw very clearly how things might be if this boy were to have the pictures. It could lead to a disaster.

"Give it here," he shouted, "you little bastard I know your game."

He leapt for the camera with his right hand pushing Baz's left against the window sill. The camera dropped out of the window.

A few moments later Baz made for the door of the room and slunk out carrying his shirt. As he left two burley policemen entered the room. The two naked men were trapped. Out of the corner of his eye Ollie saw another two coppers on the grass outside the window and Adrian in his white shirt joined them.

Two men and a woman were on the bench at the magistrates' court, Camberwell Green.

"Please state your names to the court."

"Oliver Francis Watkins", "Adrian Kerry Foley"

"Oliver Francis Watkins and, Adrian Kerry Foley you stand accused of certain immoral behaviour contrary to The Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885.

"The first count: that on or about the sixth of July you together repaired to the Bright Star Hotel, Battersea, where you took a room and were engaged in illegal acts known in the law as Sodomy."

"How do you plead on the first count Oliver Francis Watkins?"

"Not guilty, sir."

"And Adrian Kerry Foley how do you plead?"

"Not guilty, sir"

"The second count: that on or about the sixth of July you and another party or parties repaired to the Bright Star Hotel where you took a room and were engaged in acts known in the law as Gross indecency. How do you plead to the second count?"

"Not guilty, sir.", "Not guilty, sir."

The 'not guilty' pleas were on the advice of his solicitor. "I've seen the pictures. They can't use them."

Ollie was visibly frightened by the whole scenario. He could barely hold his tears back. He hated having to tell lies.

"The prosecution may present their case." said the leading magistrate.

"You represent the prosecution. Please state your name, position and your qualification"

"My name is Arthur Black and I am retained by the Police as prosecuting solicitor. I am a registered with the Law Society.

"You may continue Mr. Black."

“On the night of the sixth of July at about ten thirty p.m. the accused were seen leaving the Admiral Rodney pub. They had been eating and drinking for some time.

“The accused were observed entering the Bright Star Hotel and they booked in went immediately to a bedroom. Officers saw both men at the window of the room both bare-chested and embracing.

“The officers decided this was a breach of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and sought permission to raid the room to get *in flagrante* evidence. They obtained a duplicate key from reception and entered the room without warning. The accused were both standing naked in the room. One of the beds was in disarray and the atmosphere was described as “steamy” by one of the constables.

“A camera (offered in evidence as exhibit No 1) was found beneath the window. This camera was sent to the police laboratory and the film developed and enlarged prints were made (exhibit No 2). Sparing the lady magistrate’s sensitivities it is sufficient to say

the photographs show the two men indulging in obscene and illegal acts."

Mr. Black paused and turned over the page of his notes.

"The officers cautioned the two men and told them to get dressed. When asked what they were doing one of the accused said he was going to bed and the other party said he was going to have a shower. The room has a small shower cubical. They were asked if they were homosexuals to which both refused to answer.

"The police case is that the two men were caught *in flagrante* conducting themselves obscenely as evidenced by the photographs, committing sodomy and other gross perversions.

"I call three witnesses, namely: the receptionist who booked the two men into their room, the police sergeant in charge of the raid and the police constable who found the camera."

"Call the first witness," called the clerk after getting the nod from the magistrate.

The reception clerk was sworn in and he confirmed that he had checked in the accused men and allocated them room twenty five and given them one key. They had booked for one night only. He hadn't checked their identity. They were English and it was not required. He was thanked and dismissed.

A large policeman with sergeants' chevrons on his immaculate uniform carrying his helmet under his left arm entered the court and was directed to the witness box.

After he had given his name and number and had sworn in he repeated word for word what Mr. Black had already said.

"You may cross examine the witness." said the magistrate.

"Thank you, Sir. Sergeant, what drove you and your colleague to carry out a raid on the room of two men who happened to be sharing a room with two beds?"

"We had information from observers that there were two queer er, I mean, homosexuals in the room, sir."

"Were these observers peeping in through the window?"

"Observing, sir."

"Through the window"

"Yes."

"And where were these observers standing?"

"On the pavement directly outside the window."

"From about seventeen feet below the window were the observers able to see what was going on in the room?"

"They saw two naked men."

"I put it to you that all they could see was the torsos of men who from time to time passed the window."

"Yes, sir. At one time they were kissing and caressing."

"Were you, yourself, one of the observers?"

"I was horrified."

"Please answer the question."

"No."

"May we now consider the photographs? I have examined these pictures carefully. While I can see vile acts concerning the genitalia of two men, in none of the pictures are the faces of the men clear. Furthermore in order for these pictures to be taken there must have been a third person in the room. This Minox camera cannot be operated remotely and the prosecution has not mentioned the presence of a third person."

"Correct, sir."

"Are you able to produce the third person as a witness?"

"No."

"The camera was found on the grass outside the room in question?"

"Yes, sir."

"How many storeys has this hotel?"

The policeman consulted his pocket book.

"Floors one to five above the ground floor."

"The room in question is number twenty five. There is a room immediately below and three rooms directly above. Could the camera have dropped from any of the rooms above or below?"

After a long pause the sergeant replied, "Yes, it is possible."

"The police were requested to have the camera sent to an independent laboratory to test for fingerprints. Are you aware of this?"

"Yes, sir"

"Do you know the result of the test?"

"No, sir"

"I submit as evidence a report from Evidence Laboratories Limited. In this report it is clear that there is only one set of prints on the camera. These prints do not match the prints of either of the accused."

The solicitor paused and looked up to the bench. He thought he was having the right effect.

"The constable who accompanied you said he felt the room was steamy inferring that this indicated energetic activity. It did not occur to you that a man using a shower cubicle in a small bedroom would make it steamy."

This was just to ridicule the policemen.

"I have completed my cross examination, sir."

The chairman banged his gavel on the desk and ordered a short recess. The three magistrates returned ten minutes later.

"We have considered the case against the accused and the evidence. We find the evidence is inconclusive. Case dismissed."

7. OLIVER'S REMAND FOR MURDER AND SUICIDE.

The press were in a feeding frenzy because of the impending change in the law. Reporting on the Wolfenden Report had been a newspaper seller and it was coming to a head with the Sexual Offences Bill which was to become law soon. The differences it would make to the homosexual community were profound and as such caused enormous opposition from every reactionary and hypocritical group imaginable. The gutter press and others were never far behind in condemning and vilifying anything that smacked of liberalization.

Unfortunately for Oliver a young female body had been found floating in the King George the Fifth dock. Bronnie had been a missing person for a week. She was still on their hot list but was about to be downgraded. And so it was that, as Oliver left the court in Camberwell, he was immediately arrested and bundled into a black van to be taken on remand to Brixton Prison.

The Evening Standard, who had a stringer at Camberwell, was able to cobble together a story under the headline “

QUEER ACQUITTED

EVIDENCE DISMISSED

NOW MURDER SUSPECT

GOES STRAIGHT TO BRIXTON PRISON.

For technical reasons the evidence presented by the police, at Camberwell Magistrates' Court today, which may have consisted of extreme photographs of the accused and another man cavorting and worse, could not be allowed. The Magistrate asked for back up evidence which was not presented.

By Roger Sharpthorne

It is suspected that one of the men recently released from a charge of sodomy due to lack of evidence may have murdered his wife on arrival on board a cargo ship of the famous Foster Timms line

THE SECOND OFFICER'S WIFE

in London. The police have announced that they found a young female body in the King George the Fifth Dock where the couple's vessel was moored.

Inspector Lock of the East London and Royal Docks Constabulary said: "A body of a woman, probably in her twenties, has been found in the dock and we suspect foul play in her demise. Forensic examination is in progress and we will update the press as any results become clear.

We are asking the public to notify us of any young woman thought to have been in danger or has gone missing in the last week.

There followed a brief and largely fabricated, biography of Oliver, his career in the Merchant Navy, his boarding school education and finally his appearance in the Camberwell Green Magistrates Court.(see comment on page 30).

His mother and father visited him. His father was naturally very cold and puzzled by the whole situation. His mother tearful and sympathetic could not believe he could do such a thing. "Why couldn't you work things *out*. If you weren't compatible, oh, I don't know. You couldn't *possibly* have killed anyone. It's just not possible. My little boy couldn't *kill* anyone."

All this did was to drive Ollie into himself and he imagined that, perhaps, his inadequacy had driven her to suicide. He had never believed she could do such a thing but he realised he did not know her. Primarily in his mind during the voyage had been images of his friendship with Adrian, how he related to the other men on board and how much Wilfy had meant to him. Did Wilfy do it? He could not bring himself to believe that, but he knew Bronnie and Wilfy had a special relationship from which he was excluded and perhaps Wilfy was a killer. These things plagued him while he was locked up in the small remand cell. Shame was killing him. He was especially ashamed of his recent run-in with the police. He loved Adrian and yet that had been the first time they had broken all the sexual taboos. It was almost as if the beauty of their relationship had been in their restraint. They had had a normal man to man friendship albeit extremely intense and deep but it had not been about sex. But the demon had raised its head and been a serpent of unimaginable power.

He flushed from head to toe remembering each incident in the room. It had been Baz and Adrian who had led all the activity but he had

joined in and enjoyed every moment. After the restraints of trying to enjoy sex with Bronnie it had come as an enormous wave of relief to be there body to body with his best and most adorable friend. That horrible little squirt Baz was somewhere in the background and he thought he was going to join in for some more 'fun' but suddenly the whole scene came to an end as Adrian launched himself at Baz, Baz disappeared and they were standing naked with two coppers in the room.

The disaster replayed in his mind over and over again.

The slot in the door opened and a plate of cold food was passed in. No word was spoken. He went over to the shelf to see what had been placed there. It was obviously excrement. He retched at the sight of it and retreated to the far end of the concrete bed. Tears filled his eyes and he wept as he had never wept before. Deep sobs coming up from the lowest place in his abdomen and filling his head.

There was no stopping them.

The peep hole slid open. "Aven't cher finished yer supper? Clean plites only can be returned in five minutes."

He took the plate and the wooden spatula provided and scraped it into the stainless steel, seatless, lidless toilet. He pulled the lever to no effect. There was no water in the cistern. The fat turd would remain and the stink now released by contact with the water would plague him all night.

He suddenly feared torture. This situation was torture enough but the viciousness of the general male population towards his sort was enough to invoke really serious harm and now he was branded a wife murderer. Uxoricide he uselessly remembered was the term used. Wife killing. Why did he remember such inane word at such a time?

He lay down on the concrete bed and pulled the thin unhygienic blanket over him. Of course, he did not sleep much. His own head was keeping him awake as was the general noise from the prison. Screams and grunts came in through the locked door as did snatches of conversation. Occasionally the

bang of a nearby door shocked him awake trembling all over.

In the morning he heard the bang crash wallop of the other floors being woken and slopping out. Only the remand cells had the dubious luxury of flush toilets which did not flush. There was quiet between what he reckoned to be seven and eight o'clock. The door was opened and an officer came in. "You are free. They I.D'ed the body in the K.G.five. A dockside tart. Follow me. Leave that blanket and anything else belonging to the service"

Oliver followed the screw down a long passage towards the reception area.

"Sign here for your valuables and personal effects: one watch, one pair of cufflinks." He paused , "One small hold-all containing discharge book, seaman's card, master's certificate of competency, wallet with sixteen pounds ten shillings, cigarettes: fifteen in packet, a striped shirt, a pair of soiled underwear, a pair of cotton pyjamas, one pair of cotton trousers, two pairs of socks, a wash bag with usual items."

He looked up dully at the officer "and my gold signet ring?"

The expression on the face of the officer was imperturbable. "No signet ring," he said. "Sign here, sir. Then you can go. At the front desk you will collect a railway warrant to your home. Show it to the bus conductor to travel on the bus to Waterloo." The contempt in his voice was palpable.

He decided he was too tired to bother with a mere family heirloom. He signed.

Out in the fresh air he walked toward Brixton Hill and saw a small public park on the opposite side. He crossed and sat on a bench. It was a bright day but his thoughts were more macabre than he thought possible. He was at the nadir of emotion and was planning suicide with total resolve. He no longer wanted to rationalise or seek reasoning to ameliorate his situation. It was just too bad to handle and his life was spent: no credit left, no chance of redemption.

After a while he started to walk down the hill toward Adrian's flat but he knew he could not meet Adrian today. A bus stopped with the

platform immediately in front of him. One step to side and he was inside. He took a seat just inside, perched over the rear wheels.

“Where to chum?” said the conductor.

“To Waterloo,” he replied as he showed the conductor the warrant.

“Right-oh, mate Waterloo, you are.”

On the south side of the river Oliver alighted from the bus and started walking north west across Vauxhall Bridge. The tide was out and the muddy stream was narrow. His resolve was absolutely clear. He was a man of achievement; the worst thing that could happen now was to fail in this, his last, endeavour. His life was unbearable now but self torture would follow failure. He got to a spot where he thought the water would wash his body away and climbed the balustrade then he stood for a second and dived head-first into abyss. He had misjudged the middle of the stream so where he fell the water was only a few inches deep. His head hit the mud and his neck was instantly broken.

He was seen by about twenty people on a bus coming on behind him. The driver was oblivious to the scene. A rapid ringing of the bell made him stop. The well-meaning passengers looked at each other and over the balustrade to see the body of the man lying broken with the water washing over him. One man broke away from the crowd and ran for the telephone box at the north end of the bridge. Not long after a police car and a motorcyclist arrived. The motorcyclist had PRESS on the left breast of his leather jacket.

8. THE FINAL VOYAGE OF "PUTRA"

'm.s. Putra' had left London with a special cargo of armaments for Karachi and was destined to be beached and broken up at the infamous Gadani Beach when the cargo had been delivered.

Wilfy just promoted to Second Officer had joined in London and helped to supervise the loading of the cargo by army handlers. Rather than the regular stevedores, who refused to handle the cargo for political reasons, squaddies were being used to load the shipment of high explosives and other weaponry. The army officers could not supervise this kind of activity and the soldiers were untrained. At times he and his fellow officers had to intervene because of the dangerous way they had slung the cargo.

The outbound voyage was a general disaster. As they passed Lisbon they had been diverted from the Mediterranean because the Egyptians had given notice that they would not allow the armaments to pass through the Suez Canal. They had bunkered in Nigeria to get the

fuel needed for the longer voyage round the Cape of Good Hope, but the port of Lagos was blocked and the anchorages were full of ships trying to offload cargoes of cement and other building materials. After a week an ancient bunker barge had arrived and they had taken a hundred tons of heavy fuel oil. They suffered five breakdowns on the way to Cape Town due to water in the fuel. All the watch officers and especially the engineers were continually worried about being stopped dead-in-the-water at any time of day or night. The vessel had to call in at Durban for essential revictualling because they had run out of most food items loaded in London for the shorter voyage through the Suez Canal.

In Durban some of the lascars got into trouble going on to a 'whites only' beach. This delayed the progress of the voyage by one day as the captain had to pay their fines. Then they were delayed another day because news came through that an aircraft had spotted an oil slick as the ship progressed past Port Elizabeth. Rudimentary environmental laws were in force to protect the famous surfing beaches. The Chief Engineer was at his wit's end trying to make the fuel fit for the engines by removing

the water but had nowhere to discharge the residual water except into the sea. The captain then had to cable back to London to get this second outrageous fine paid. He was becoming a nervous wreck because he feared London would dump him without pension for his incompetence. The Chief Engineer was beginning to have the same qualms.

By the time they arrived in Karachi the whole ship's company was ragged with exhaustion. The highly explosive cargo was unloaded by a mix of soldiers and coolies on to ancient Second World War army lorries and some on to camel carts. Here the army officers were very respectful but at the same time much too self important and gung-ho to get seriously involved in the unloading of heavy, delicate cargoes.

There was a mass of paperwork to do to decommission the vessel ready to hand over to the breakers. London bureaucrats sent lists of things to be salvaged and freighted back, many of which existed only in their imaginations. Some officers had wanted to take things from the ship but it was made clear that everything had to be accounted for. Endless lists of "loose

gear” had to be checked. Into Wilfy’s domain came the bridge instrumentation: compasses, brass dividers, parallel rulers, azimuth rings, the chronometers and a host of publications all had to be listed and packed for the benefit of management in London. All of the officers knew the exercise was futile because most of the objects would be lost or stolen in transit. But it had to be done. They all worked out their stress with gin and tonic or, for the older hands, “pink” gin, after starting at breakfast time with Carlsberg lager or stronger, local Murree beer and collapsing at nine or ten in the evening straight to bed. During this time the services on board were sporadic so showers were infrequent and the toilets flushed randomly.

One day Wilfy had noticed, as he crossed the boat deck, the door of the CO2 room was open and peaking inside he saw the gas cylinders had all gone. The Third Engineer was leaning over the railing staring down at the wharf.

“Hey Jordie what’s going on?”

“Wha’ j’mean pal?”

"The gas bottles."

"Look, man, down there on the camel carts."

And sure enough two camels were plodding away off the dock pulling carts made of reconstructed flatbed trucks. The cylinders were tied down in neat rows.

"We'll all get a wee bonus from them, maybe a case of beer. The Chief says they weren't on the inventories so he's mobilized them for his own benefit, and ours. A pretty penny he'll be getting and we'll all get a bit of a dib. You'll never guess what those coolies found in the bottom of the locker," he paused for effect: "A corpse, man. Probably just a shipyard worker."

He remembered the last time he had seen the inside of the room his heart missed a beat and he began to feel physically sick. The engineer saw his pallor.

"You alright, pal? You look as if you've seen a ghost."

"I'm OK, mate. It's just an old memory. Nothing at all and I'll have one of your beers when you get paid out. See you later, Jordie."

Wilfy went down to his cabin and sat on the bunk while his heartbeat subsided. He leant down and opened the drawer under his bunk and hefted a half bottle of whisky to his mouth. Fortified he had a further duty to perform.

He had to assist the local agent paying off the crew. With nothing to lose most of the Lascars argued vehemently about overtime payments and severance. Wilfy was generally sympathetic to the crewmen trying to ameliorate the hard line taken by the officious *babu* whose job it was to minimize the company's liabilities and, no doubt, maximise his *buckshee*.

When that bunfight was over he went to his cabin to change his shirt. It was the general rule that the second third and fourth officers had the shared service of a steward. He was an old man, Francisco Valera, "Chico". He was doddering at his job but they respected him and forgave him his foibles. They knew his poor

performance was partly their own fault for slipping him the odd bottle of gin from time to time. He was being retired after discharge in Karachi and would be going home to Goa to enjoy his meagre pension. Wilfy had been clearing up his own cabin the night before the crew was to be discharged. He had set aside five pounds for tipping "Chico" and the Chief Cook. Not seeing it on the desk under a brass paperweight where he'd left it, he checked his wallet. He hunted high and low for it. He had been drinking beer all day and although he was not inebriated his judgement was no doubt impaired. He asked the cadets if they had taken it for any reason and he then asked Chico if he had seen it. Chico immediately thought he was being accused of something and his demeanour became defensive and suspicious. In the end Wilfy was convinced of his guilt.

"That sly old bugger! We have befriended him and kept him on long past his useful life. That old bastard took my money, I am sure." So he reported him to the Chief Steward. On top of all the other detritus he had to put up with the last thing he wanted was to adjudicate over some old man stealing a five pound note.

“Look, if you’re certain I’ll call the agent and he’ll hand the case over to the cops. But don’t expect me to help. In the mean time look for the bloody thing yourself. It’s a month’s wages for a steward so it’s a serious accusation.”

Wilfy went away and joined the others in a pour-out to celebrate the demise of this rust-bucket called “Putra”

“Who the fuck would call a ship a name like that? Surely they won’t use that name again. Can you imagine a fast container ship called ‘Putra’?”

The next morning the Chief Steward mentioned Wilfy’s complaint to the agent and two police constables came on board and arrested Chico. As he was taken away Wilfy had misgivings. Did he really believe this lovely old man would steal a five pound note however desperate? He then went down to his cabin and sat down to check on this own packing. He had purloined one souvenir: a station pointer which had not appeared on any inventory. It was not a large or valuable item but something he would remember this old ship by.

Just under the polished mahogany box he saw the five pound note.

"Oh shit," he said out loud. He remembered moving the box from the desk to his cabin trunk. The currency must have stuck to the underneath.

He immediately left his cabin and went up to the Chief Steward's office. "Where's Chico?"

"He was obliged to go ashore with two police constables, not under arrest as yet, but to make a statement at the police station."

"Fuck! He didn't take it. I've just found it."

"They'll probably beat him up a bit until he confesses. It's what they do. Then they'll squeeze him for some of his wages. If you want to get him out of trouble walk up there and tell the Inspector it was all a big mistake. You will probably have to bribe the man to let him go. He'll be like a dog with a bone."

Wilfy decided he must go and get the unfortunate Chico out of trouble. He was very surprised when he arrived at the police station to be sat down immediately, opposite the

Police Inspector in his office. There were three others in the room: Chico, and the two coolies he had seen on the camel cart.

"I can explain," Wilfy started, "this man is innocent and I must apologise for making trouble for him by my own very bad mistake."

"I see," said the Police Inspector. "Are you Mr. Ferring the Second Officer of the 'Putra'?" he asked raising a large bushy eyebrow.

"Yes that's why I'm here to clear Valera's name and get him off the hook. He's innocent. I made a stupid mistake and he took nothing."

"This man, Valera, has been helping us with the enquiry into the case of the female corpse which was found by the other two men you see standing there. He has come up with a witness statement concerning you. According to him he saw you and a young woman entering the space in question when the vessel was docked in London five years ago. He has stated that the woman, the wife of Mr. Oliver Watts, was posted as missing. His solemnly written statement specifically points to your involvement in the demise of this young woman. I found, in the possession of one of

these men, a navy blue pullover with your name taped in the neck. I caught him stealing it, but it occurs to me that this is vital evidence placing you at some time inside the locker. The man says it was in the hand of the deceased and around her arm. I therefore have no option but to detain you until we either clear the matter up or arrest you in connection with her death."

Wilfy was absolutely stunned by the accusation but also very frightened as he knew that a statement from Valera had plausibility. He had completely forgotten the pullover but he could now remember that in the hurry to get out of the locker he may have left it inside. He hoped his fear did not show as he sat in shocked silence.

"You will not be locked up but I will take charge of your seaman's documents and your passport while you continue with your valuable duties on board your ship. I will accompany you back to the vessel to collect the aforementioned documents. Is that clear?. If you wish to say anything regarding this situation now, I will have to caution you. You may remain silent until such time as you may

be arrested and questioned," he stated in the stilted formal manner of policemen throughout the world.

He continued: "In the mean time the cylinder space and the immediate surroundings will be secured and subjected to scrutiny by me and a forensic team.

"Valera will be released but in no circumstances are you to speak to him or contact him in any way."

Khan then rang a bell on his desk. Another officer in a smart uniform and turban entered and stood to attention.

"Sergeant, this steward needs to be accompanied down to the 'Putra'. He will collect his pay, his documents and all his personal effects. You will give him quarters in the lines. He will mess with you. We may have to keep him here a few days as a material witness." Khan took a sheet of paper and wrote a note for the sergeant to show why he was removing Valera to the care of the police.

9. FIRST INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION AFTER KARACHI

Captain George Flint and the directors of the Foster Timms Steamship Company were not pleased with the news that 'Putra' was held up in Karachi. The ship would not be released to the breakers' beach until the matter of the dead woman was cleared up and Foster Timms would not get their money from the breaker. Although some of their expenses for the crew might be covered by their Protection and Indemnity insurance they would still lose a pretty penny. The directors dispatched the Marine Superintendent, Captain Flint, to Karachi to sort the mess out.

Having sullied the crime scene thoroughly, the two coolies had gone to the third engineer, who had been directing their work with the gas bottles, and jabbered incomprehensibly leading him up to the boat deck and the CO2 locker but he could not see their discovery which remained deep in the trunkway hidden by a mattress and a soiled towel. They had then

gone to the police station to report to the Superintendent. Under his supervision they had removed the mattress and the towel and tied a rope under her arms and round her chest and pulled her out. The corpse had been dead for at least five years and was dry like a mummy and very brittle.

Ayub Khan had ensured that the evidence, however obscure, was gathered from the CO2 compartment and bagged for presentation to Detective Inspector Monroe on his arrival.

It was not the first time he had seen a corpse but this very shrivelled example would have horrified anybody. At the inquest at the High Court in Karachi it became clear that nobody was very interested in the corpse until they realised that this incident would slow down the process of sale and movement the vessel to the dismantling site and the subsequent repatriation of the body and the crew to England and the end of the nightmare voyage for good and all time.

From the Metropole Hotel, Flint made frequent forays to the courts and legal offices riding in splendour in ancient Buick or

Studebaker taxis or on cracked leather upholstery in battered Austins or, if these weren't available, in three wheeled motor rickshaws.

Scotland Yard sent Detective Inspector Monroe to liaise with the Pakistani Police and bring the suspect home if he found sufficient evidence. The huge Pathan, Police Inspector Ayub Faisal Khan, insisted he come to London as he had to swear the veracity of Francisco Valera's statement, describe his investigation and present statements from the pathologist and the two coolies who had led to the discovery of the body. Flint and Monroe made a good friend of Ayub Khan. Flint promised him that Foster Timms would pay his fare to England and Khan promised to clear red tape with alacrity. The three drank *chota pegs* of whisky at the Gymkhana Club in the evenings looking over the Maidan watching the cricket players until, as the sun went down, they drew stumps and shuffled back to the pavilion.

Flint finally managed to clear the ship for demolition. Khan and Monroe decided they had to arrest and charge Wilfy on the day the ship was towed round to Gadani. That was the end

of "Putra". She was beached and put under the oxy-acetylene torches within minutes.

Finally it was agreed that the testimony of the steward, Valera, was critical and a pullover, found in the room, was damning, all other evidence was codified sufficiently for it to go before the Admiralty Court in London. Khan, handcuffed to Wilfy, would fly back with them.

Police Inspector Khan was somewhat put out when he and Wilfy were allocated seats at the back of the Comet 4 while Flint and Munroe, in a quasi colonial fashion, were in First Class up front. They stopped for fuel at Beirut and Rome giving them a chance to stretch their legs while Wilfy and Khan were obliged to remain seated in the back of the plane.

At Heathrow Wilfy was handed over to the local constabulary who were somewhat less gentle. He was pushed into the back of a shaky black Maria, spending the first night in a holding cell in Hounslow and then on to be processed at Wandsworth. He was held in remand for three months and taken to the Old

Bailey for trial. He had frequent visits from his London barrister appointed by his father on the advice of his local solicitor in Hampshire.

Second officer "Wilfy" Ferring was in the dock awaiting the return of the jury. He had just endured a week of indisputable yet inaccurate testimony against him. He was sure he was going to be sent down for manslaughter, but he was also charged with the more serious crime of murder.

It had all been somewhat baffling. Six weeks ago he had no idea that he had committed any crime at all, but the evidence put before the jury had raised in him the suspicion that five years ago he had precipitated the death of a young woman on board a ship and that the court might consider it to be an act of murder or at least manslaughter.

His QC had advised him against pleading guilty to murder or even the lesser charge of manslaughter on the basis that the criminal record would blight the rest of his life and that, being a very eminent Q.C., he had sufficient arguments to get him off.

After all the formalities of the court procedure and the opening statements from the prosecution and his defence barrister the first witness was called:

"So, Mr. Valera, you have stated that you saw the accused enter the carbon dioxide locker with the victim in London on the 25th May 1965. Please tell the jury how you came to be on the boat deck to see them."

"Yes, sir, my lord." There was a pause as the old man gathered his thoughts. "You see the Captain sahib needed gin. The old captain was a Scotchman, Captain Mudie, only drank whisky, no like gin. New man wanted gin-tonic. He called the Chief Steward to get gin but the bonded store was sealed - customs. Captain said to me 'Chico, Chief Steward says there is a cupboard in the officers' wardroom marked 'board games' with some bottles in it. The key is hanging behind the bar. Take this chitty, get a bottle of Gordon's and leave the chitty in the cupboard.' I said 'yes sir.' I knew about cupboard. It was for emergencies. Customs not to know about it."

"So this has established why you were on the boat deck. When did you see the accused and what was he doing?"

"When I was coming back, sir. Number one cadet, Mr. Wilfy, was going into CO2 locker and second officer's wife was with him."

"And what did you think of this?"

"Not thinking, sir. Not my business. Only Captain's special steward; Captain needs gin."

"What happened next?"

"Nothing, sir. Door closed. I took gin. Not see number one cadet or woman again."

"Please tell the court how you know it was the Second Officer's wife with Mr. Ferring? Did you identify her positively."

"It was a woman."

"Perhaps it was his girl friend visiting the ship."

"No visitors, sir. Customs still on board. Ship not cleared for visitors. No other womans on board"

"How did you identify the senior cadet?
Was he wearing uniform?"

"No sir. Mufty, sir."

"Do you have any doubt that it was him?"

"No, sir. Surely, I am saying the truth, sir."

"How did know it was CO2 locker?"

"Door is black with CO2 painted white, big letters, no mistake."

"Mr. Valera, please tell the jury what is your position now"

"Yes, sir, my lord. I am pensioner."

"And who pays your pension? How much is your pension?"

"I am receiving maximum pension, sir, after forty two years service, sir. The amount is two hundred and twenty rupees from Foster Timms Company, sir."

"Have you received any of this money?"

"Yes, sir"

"Mr. Valera, why were you arrested in Karachi?"

"There was false accusation against me."

"You had in your possession a five pound note, did you not?"

Valera nodded.

"The note you stole from the Second Officer, Mr. Ferring?"

"No, sir. It was all false and I was crying 'it was not me'. The ignorant constables only speak Urdu. I am Christian. I do not steal from my officer."

"Yes, of course. Can you tell the court what happened then?"

"Nobody believed me. They threw me in a cell with a very nasty drunk ignorant Sindi man. But there was big kerfuffle going on in the station. Coming and going and shouting orders. Sindi man said in English that the coolies are saying there is a dead body in the CO2 room on your ship. 'You know about this? Tell me the story, are you murderer, little

servant boy?' Then he shouted, 'This man knows about the dead man in the CO2 room!' Sindi man was just making trouble."

"Did anything happen after that?"

"Sergeant came in. He speak little English. I told him 'I have evidence of very bad hanky panky on this ship' and he said, 'what hanky panky?' 'maybe murder,' I said."

"And then what happened?"

"Very big man, Pathan. Uniform starched very stiff, stripes in gold and medals on chest, big turban with bronze badge. He came to the cell and a constable grabbed me and pushed me upstairs to this *burra-sahib's* office. Two coolies were there with another stinking constable."

"What did this Officer want?"

" 'What about this hanky-panky murder?' He asked me in English language, sir."

"What else, Mr. Valera?"

"I was very frightened. He was very big Pathan. He must be killing many criminals in

his time. So I said, 'I have seen things happening in the CO2 locker.' Then he turned to the two coolies and spoke in common Urdu. They were gabbling back in that language. He looked back at me. 'These men say they smelt death in that locker. These men know the smell of death.' "

"What did you think about this? Were you surprised?" asked the barrister.

"I was thinking, sir. There was a rumour that the Second Officer's wife had disappeared after London five years ago. It came out in the trial, sir. Second officer, Mr. Watkins, was in court for immoral crimes, unnatural sins of the flesh. It was in the newspaper. There was a rumour that he killed his wife. He was charged with murder. He is dead now, during the trial. They say suicide in the newspaper."

The Q.C. turned the judge: "That is all my lord."

"The defence may cross examine the witness."

"It must have been very distressing Mr. Valera, that after forty two years of loyal

service you are falsely accused of stealing from the very officer you have served so loyally."

"Yes, sir, I was very unhappy and thought I would be discharged there in Pakistan with no money and no pension and go to jail. I thought I should die. But I prayed that the money would be found and all would be well." Chico looked as if he was going to burst into tears immediately.

"I can imagine your distress; the jury can imagine your distress I am sure. Being a man with his back against the wall, so to speak, you would naturally look for a solution to your difficulty, a way out."

Wilfy's barrister had made a statement but it was almost a question.

Chico was not quick enough to see the trap.

"Yes, sir, I wanted to get away from the stinking police station, the ignorant constables and the big Pathan. I was frightened and scared."

"Of course you were frightened but still thinking intelligently, able to make a plan. I put it to you that you, knowing the first suspect for the murder was dead, you thought: 'here's my chance to get out of here. Here's my chance for revenge.'"

"No, no, sir. Not revenge but truth."

"You took advantage of this vague report of the smell of death told by the two coolies and concocted this story so you could get the second officer into trouble and at the same time get off the charge of theft against you."

Valera was visibly shaken by the barrister he paled, through his wrinkled dark skin. Obviously a man who had been bullied and bossed around all his life by various types of white men he was now called upon to save his honour by speaking up.

"No sir. I made statement, sir. Long statement typing out and signed."

Wilfy's Q.C. asked, "Is this your statement?"

"Yes, sir. Looks like."

"This statement," said the barrister with a light contempt, holding up a sheet of brownish, faded typescript "Did you have any help with making it?"

"No, sir"

The judge interrupted.

"Please arrange for copies of this statement may be issued to the jury. There will be a short adjournment. The clerk will see to it." The judge stood and disappeared through the door behind him.

There was a recess for twenty minutes.

The jury sat as the clerk handed out the Roneoed re-typed copies of the statement which read as follows:

I, Francisco Valera, Steward on board the m.s. "Putra" make this truthful statement:

I have been accused of stealing a five pound note. I am innocent. I am rightly the owner of a five pound note

obtained by selling certain merchandise in London on our last call there.

I wish to report suspicious behaviour which may have bearing on case arising with reference to Mr. William Ferring, Second Officer. This took place about five years ago in London when the same ship was in the King George the Fifth Dock. I saw Mr. Ferring and a woman enter the CO2 locker on the boat deck around about ten o'clock on the docking day. I did not see either of them again.

Signed: Francisco Valera
Witnessed Aiyub Faisal Khan, Police
Inspector, Karachi West District

After a few minutes the clerk called for everyone to stand and the judge resumed his seat.

"You may resume your cross examination, Mr. Curtis."

Curtis approached the witness stand, "Who typed this statement?" he asked with a shade of contempt for the document.

"I, sir, trained typist; ship's clerk before captain's steward. Pathan said I can use typewriter save him having to correct too many mistakes made by useless constable. I signed it: Francisco Valera. He signed it: Aiyub Faisal Khan, Police Inspector." Chico said with a confident look of satisfaction.

"So you deny coming forward with your testimony simply to get out of jail."

"I deny it, sir. I was still in jail until Second Officer Wilfy found five pound note and told the Police Inspector." The barrister lifted an eyebrow. "I mean, Mr. Ferring, the defendant, there. I was in jail when they brought Second Officer in on charge of suspected murder. He was crying very much.

"The first thing he said to the big Pathan was 'that man is innocent I found it.' Then I felt bad. You see it was all a big mistake. They would have let me go to jail these sahibs. Just like colonials. They bloody not respectful of Indian people."

The judge intervened as Valera was beginning to scream his rant at the whole court.

"Thank you. Have we heard enough from this witness, Mr. Curtis?"

"Yes, m'lord"

The next witness to be sworn in was the engineer George "Geordie" Johnson.

" Mr. Johnson, You are Third Engineer officer on the "Peking Ophir" now. Is that correct?" the prosecuting barrister stood looking confident as he warmed the witness up with some obvious questions.

"Yes, sir," answered Geordie Johnson.

"And what was your job back in April on the 'Putra' in Karachi?"

"I was an Assistant Engineer."

"And what did your job as assistant engineer involve?"

"I was on day work assisting the Second Engineer in repairs and maintenance. I was not a watch keeper."

“Had the trip been satisfactory for you?”

“Well, sir, we had difficulties and it fell to the second and me to try continually to keep the fuel clean by servicing the centrifuges and filters. It was almost a 24 hour job. The fuel we took in Nigeria was the worst fuel he had ever seen. By the time we got to Karachi we were both done in.”

“And what happened the day after you arrived?”

“I had a lay-in, and at around nine o'clock the Chief Engineer called me into his cabin. The Second was in there too. 'Sit down Geordie,' the second handed me a cold beer. Anyway after a bit of chat about how bad the trip had been the second suddenly said 'Arm yourself with a couple of spanners, lad, and go up and disconnect all the CO2 cylinders ready to ship them ashore.'

“'Right,' I said, 'Will I finish me beer first?' so I stayed a while and this Indian man came in. The Chief told me he was called Yusuf or somesuch. The man gave the Chief a fat envelope. The Chief peered inside and I glimpsed money. 'Don't worry, son. You'll get

your share. Just nip up free off those bottles and Yusuf's gang will get them away. The Bosun's already there rigging a derrick'

"So, Mr. Johnson, was it your job to supervise the removal of gas cylinders from the CO2 locker when the vessel was in Karachi?"

"Aye, yes, sir. The Chief Engineer told me to disconnect each cylinder, remove the clamps and get the gang of men he sent up to lift them out and see them off the ship."

"Did any of the ship's crew see you or assist you?"

"Yes sir, the bosun and a couple of sailors topped a derrick and the bosun drove the winch to lower them on to the quay."

"Were any other officers involved?"

"No, sir, just me."

"What was the position of the door at this time?"

"It was open, hooked back, so there was plenty of air. This space is designated a

confined space and must be well ventilated before anyone goes in."

"Was there anything noticeable about the air in the space?"

"Not at first but as time went on it was a bad smell. I wanted to finish the job as quick as possible. I thought it might be hydrogen sulphide from the gas bottles. I'd read about it but I didn't know much about it just that it has a bad smell and might be dangerous."

"Did you close the door when you'd finished?"

"No, sir, but the Second Officer, Mr. Ferring, came by and he said I should shut it, so I did."

"Did Mr. Ferring seem to think it was important to close the door?"

"Not really, sir, but he seemed a bit shocked. I put it down to the fact that he had seen us taking the bottles which, in retrospect, I realise, was stealing from the company. He then cheered up and said he'd be round for a beer later."

"The two men, coolies, sent to help you by Mr. Yusuf, did you see them again, after the job was finished?"

"They left the ship and I saw them jump on the back of a camel cart as it left the dock. Then they came back an hour or more later with the Police Inspector. I was curious so I went up o the boat deck and they had hauled out the body of the woman."

"When they were working with you, did they seem to be alarmed by the work or the location?"

"They got a bit excited when we were about halfway through the job. They were gabbling in Hindustani language. Yusuf had gone. I didn't think it strange at the time. They seemed worried about the smell in the room. We could all breathe O.K. and the job would be finished quickly so I just told them, *jaldi, jaldi*, hurry up, like."

"So, to be absolutely clear: although the two coolies seemed to be alarmed by the air in the room, you were not because you thought it was just the smell of the gas escaping as you released the cylinders. Is this the case?"

"Completely, sir. When I shut the door, at the suggestion of the Second Mate, er, Mr. Ferring, I just thought 'job done' and went to report to the Second Engineer."

"You say 'suggestion'. Did Mr. Ferring order you or instruct you to shut the door?"

"I don't think so; I guess he thought it looked untidy left open."

"What happened later?"

"The coolies returned with the Police Chief."

"Then what?"

"They went into the CO2 room and they pulled her body out on a rope which the coolies had tied under her arms and round her chest. The corpse was dry like a mummy."

"Mr. Johnson, what were your feelings at this action?"

"I was horrified. It was the first time I had seen a corpse and this very shrivelled example would have horrified anybody."

The barrister half-turned to the jury as he said "Thank you, Mr. Johnson."

The greatest argument in his summing-up was the lack of motive and the denial by Wilfy. In his summing up his Q.C. made much of the fact that the husband, Oliver Warrington, had been in court for homosexual acts and had committed suicide soon after the docking of the vessel in London. He inferred that homosexuals were unstable and his failed marriage was provocation for extreme action. The barrister had uncovered the arraignment of Ollie for the murder and inferred that his suicide might indicate guilt. It pained Wilfy that his dear friend Ollie was taking the blame for an act he definitely did not do while Wilfy himself was possibly, and ever more probably, the perpetrator. Wilfy was beginning to think the expensive brief was worth his fee although he was an arrogant and cruel bastard. Ollie was dead and Wilfy was alive to fight another day this logic supported his case but brought tears of guilt to his eyes.

The clerk was leading the jury in to their places. They had been out for three days deliberating. He knew he had to face the

verdict soon. He would be told to stand up. The foreman or leader of the jury would be directed to stand and deliver the jury's decision. He felt as if his gut was being twisted like a Spanish windlass. He couldn't shit himself because he hadn't eaten for three days and his gut was so screwed up he knew nothing could pass through. He was already in extreme pain. When the verdict came, if it were 'guilty', he was sure he would self destruct. In his seagoing career he had faced severe storms one serious collision and grounding on a rocky coast. Never had he felt such fear as he felt now. In those situations there had always been a practical solution, a way out and an opportunity to use his skills and instincts to save himself and others but in those cases he had not been to blame. Waiting for the order to stand up and be judged was the worst thing ever. His only previous experience in court was to give evidence and in both cases his evidence had been trivial and circumstantial.

He had been called back to the court at ten o'clock because they said the jury was ready with the verdict. It was now two o'clock in the afternoon and he had no idea what the delay had been. He had been up and down to the

cells three times and the jury had not appeared. This time the jury was actually being filed in.

Over the last few days he had been trying to work out how he had managed to be so careless all that time ago, whether he should feel guilty or was it somebody else's negligence which had caused the death of the girl whom he could not even remember precisely in spite of being her lover for a year and several months. This was futile as was his other train of thought which reflected on his life in between.

Much can happen in five years. He had married a year after that fatal voyage and now had two children and a wife to support. He had progressed in his career and lived in a heavily mortgaged house in Perth W.A.

Until his arrest in Karachi he had seen himself as settled and happy with his lot. He had served in a variety of ships in the Foster Timms Steamship Company and had been promised if he did the final scrapping voyage of the old "Putra" he would be posted to one of

the new container ships with good career prospects.

This wretched business, dragging up his rather reckless past was an interruption. He had stuff to do and he rationalised what good was this trial anyway: Bronnie was dead, Ollie was dead and he was alive and had to face his new responsibilities. They might put him away and who would provide for Julie and the kids. Pragmatically it was ridiculous. These thoughts made him angry.

On the third day the judge opened proceedings by requesting both the leading barristers to join him in chambers. He asked the prosecutor first: "Do you have any more witnesses or any hard evidence to support this conviction?"

The prosecutor said he had nothing more to offer.

The judge said, "I cannot allow this case to go before the jury where the evidence is inconclusive and may lead to a conviction base on prejudice or hearsay. It is therefore my intention to dismiss this case as the evidence

brought up so far is circumstantial and has been effectively challenged.

“As the case is dismissed it does not prevent the charge being brought again if conclusive evidence is found.”

Wilfy had been brought back to the dock around ten o'clock on the third day and to his absolute surprise when the judge re-entered the court and the jury had returned to their place, the judge stated, “The prosecution has no further evidence to bring to this case and the evidence so far is inconclusive and unreliable. I have therefore decided that proceedings should be halted and the case dismissed from this court.”

Wilfy was stunned when the usher opened the gate and he left.

10. WILFY CONTUING HIS CAREER

Wilfy was relieved. There was no denying his lightened feelings. A court had accepted that he didn't do it. Of course, he felt very sad, even depressed about the fate of poor Bronnie, but she was water under the bridge - something that happened in another life.

He was puzzled as to how it happened. The autopsy report had mentioned contusions to her face and back of the neck. He couldn't imagine Jones had tussled with her. Perhaps he thought he could rape her in her vulnerable state, but no, Jones was a decent sort.

Well he wouldn't dwell on it. It was too painful and he had to straighten himself out and get on with his career. He decided not to go back to Foster Timms as he had heard there was a good life to be had on cruise liners. Sun Galactic cruises was advertising for navigation officers for their new cruise ships. This was the time when millions of dollars had been invested in an entirely new type of vessel designed only

for the cruise market which was expected to boom in the coming decade and forever.

To Wilfy the macroeconomic was not an issue; he wanted a job and a glamorous one would do fine. He went as Second Officer and anticipated quick promotion as there a temporary shortage of officers and he was ideal cruise ship material.

It was nothing but pleasure to go to Gieves and Hawkes to outfit himself with all the uniforms required including the black mess kit and the white 'bum freezer'.

As it happened, in the early seventies the Galactic line switched their marketing effort and schedules to Australia as the U.K. faced a recession and shortage of loose money. Their signature offering was the Japanese cherry blossom and summer cruises and, cruises to romantic Pacific islands of Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga, Hawaii and the Western seaboard of the USA.

It was as First Officer that he fell for a pretty 'ChillyHo' (a Childrens' Hostess) called Amanda Bluff, ten years his junior. More likely she fell for him. The first thing she noticed was

that he was a winner and would go far with his handsome upright appearance, very polished manner and obvious competence in everything he did.

She on the other hand was a winner at choosing the people in her life. Ever since she could talk she had organized her peers, wrapped her daddy round her little finger and run her mummy ragged, getting things done her way.

Of course Wilfy could not see this, in fact he welcomed the change from the various women he had encountered who had come on cruises to escape the strictures of home life. Many an engagee threw themselves at the men, particularly the officers in their smart uniforms, for a last sexual fling before the suburban lives they were bound for. Many young factory girls or secretaries were overwhelmed by the ambience on board and when invited to an officer's stateroom for drinks were all too easily seduced by the sweet talk and sophistication, as they saw it, or the rough and ready propositions of the engineers.

Veronica was a different kettle of fish. She had a strategy. Not for her, the blatant flirting or incautious suggestive remarks of other hungry female staff, but very subtle ambushes and very off handed encounters suggesting avoidance.

She knew she was a stunner to look at being tall and athletic, blond and blue eyed. She allowed Wilfy to be a perfect gentleman. They went ashore together in Sydney. She was a West Coast girl but as she was impressed by the sights and sounds of the metropolis she did not let on. This was her country and she wanted Wilfy to think she was in possession. From then on they were frequent companions on excursions ashore until she was sure he was properly enamoured, as she was beginning to be, and bedded him.

They were compatible. Neither was inexperienced and each knew their own wants and needs and how to satisfy the other. It was obviously a match made in heaven and they were married in Perth in 1975. She gave up her job and moved back with her parents while Wilfy bought a beautiful Oceanside plot in North Freemantle, on a tip-off from her dad,

and commissioned the building of a good sized brick house.

This was their shared project and, when on leave, Wilfy enjoyed joining the tradesmen concreting, bricklaying, roofing, plumbing and cabling. He was still climbing the promotion ladder at sea getting the four stripes of Staff Captain while the project was still running. Amanda loved him for the way he dropped all pretensions of rank as he joined in the work of the artisans, taking courses in plumbing, electrics and carpentry to ensure he pulled his weight with the mob of skilled workers on site. He was becoming a real credible Aussie.

Following a well trodden path, Amanda, who was immensely fit from surfing, swimming and helping on the site, gave birth to two boys in quick succession as the house was reaching completion in early 1976 and 1977. This was the Australian dream and home life soon settled into a routine of barbie parties round the pool or on the beach in front of the house. For the boys it was sport, sport and sunblock even before they were in primary school and then ever after.

Just occasionally, prompted by a repetitive bad dream in which he stuffed a polystyrene manikin down a narrow hatchway on a rusty old ship, he would have qualms about his possible responsibility for the death of Bronnie. He was doing well. He was highly disciplined and conscientious in his job. He had stopped drinking alcohol almost completely, ordering the stewards to bring him pure tonic water whenever he ordered a gin and tonic, and sipping his wine at mealtimes. He honoured Amanda by shrugging off any and all advances made by female passengers and started studying hard for a degree in Nautical Studies and Maritime History. He still oozed charm and confidence and became the must-sail-with Captain when he got his first command in 1980.

The Sun Galaxy management was convinced that the premiership of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 would usher in a new era of prosperity in England so in 1981 they moved the 'Galaxy Spectrum' from the Far East back to Southampton for the summer season and kept her there.

Captain William Ferring was their obvious choice for the command. Of course, he helped them to make a grand success of the venture against the more established P&O, whose reputation was tarnished by some very negative articles in Sunday newspapers. Their fares were lower but not uneconomical as their offshore management structure allowed them to make good profits with one, two and finally three ships making a regular rotation. The ships were smaller allowing them to visit smaller harbours and to give the passengers a more intimate experience.

Wilfy was able to fly home on leave for a month after a two month stint. Some would not enjoy this disjointed life but he thrived on it and the family loved to have him back for four or five weeks at a time.

11. INCRIMINATING EVIDENCE.

In 1983 the Chief Inspector of the East London 'Parish' of Plaistow received an email from on high that there were probably too many historical cases which should either be cleared up or abandoned before the police station was abandoned for sale.

"Aha," he thought, "that bloody smart graduate girl."

He dispatched his latest recruit, a keen young female police constable, Yasmin Baker, to rummage through files in the basement to see if any old cases were viable. She came across the several cases where the perpetrator was not found but one case of a homicide where the suspect walked free through lack of sufficient evidence to convince the judge that the case should be concluded.

She had read through the court proceedings and was convinced the witness statements made sense and therefore, this William Ferring was a very plausible perpetrator. He had been represented by an eminent QC and had pleaded not guilty the charges and the case had collapsed because

his barrister had cast sufficient doubt for the judge to dismiss the case. Reading deeply into the case she was very puzzled by the connected case of the victim's husband who had been accused of the murder five years earlier but had committed suicide before the case came to trial.

Among the effects, collected all those years ago from the scene, was a knotted used condom. It had been in a foil packet and wrapped in a woman's handkerchief in the victim's handbag. The smear taken had been accepted as suitable for DNA analysis. A pullover found at the scene had been bagged and inventoried but not presented at the trial, possibly because it was not seen as relevant. She had requested to see the actual items and to her surprise found the garment had a Cash's name tape with the defendant's name on it. It had probably been missed by the police in Karachi who would not have been familiar with the practice of marking clothes in this way, thinking it was just a maker's brand label. Very careful examination of this garment, through the plastic bag, revealed the presence of several long blond hairs and apparently two pubic hairs. Without breaking the seal on the

bag, Yasmin sent the bagged item to the lab with an explanation of her findings.

As she trawled through the evidence and referred to the present she found that Ferring had become a senior Captain in a very prestigious cruise line company. A man held in high esteem by his management and the passengers, some of whom would only embark on voyages if he were the Captain. It excited her to know she was on the trail of the mighty. She would be able to bring down a, no doubt pompous, senior figure for a crime he had thought he had got away with. She redoubled her efforts but realised she would have to be very smart indeed to avoid the establishment closing ranks to protect a senior and respected member. She was aware of influence which could be applied to the case by, for instance, the Freemasons. She wondered if her boss was one of them, and then if the Captain might be also.

She found out that Captain William Ferring was in charge of the 's.s. Blue Fantasia', a cruise liner regularly calling into Southampton during the summer. The ship specialised in one or two week cruises to Lisbon, Gibraltar, The

Balearics, The South of France, Italy, Greece, The Canaries and a few ports in Northern Africa.

It had been a long shot to see if there was DNA evidence and the Superintendent had not been in favour at first. She delved into their local statistics and pointed out very tactfully that they had not solved a single cold case murder since the Home Office had sent down a memo requesting that old cases should be solved or discarded with the implication that a significant number should be pursued if there were any chance of a resolution or preferably a conviction.

The Chief was fighting a crime wave of warehouse thefts and shootings as the unemployed dockers and their offspring, a tribe not renowned for their high moral standards, struggled to make a living as the world around them was being torn down for redevelopment. He needed a result or two to boost his credibility in the face of the perceived weakness in controlling crime. Any potential success would be welcome.

She asked for a rail warrant to visit Southampton and in conjunction with the local police she arranged to go on board the ship. She told nobody the purpose of the visit just that she would like to go aboard and meet the Captain. Fortunately the British Transport Police had some business with the Captain regarding an assault by a crew member on a passenger so she was able to tag along. They met the Captain in his dayroom cum office adjacent to his sleeping quarters and bathroom. The local sergeant introduced her as a new constable gaining experience and she asked to use the captain's bathroom taking samples from the hairbrush. She could use these for an initial investigation and, if they proved positive, she could take another sample, after he had been cautioned, to use as evidence for the prosecution.

"Eureka!" Yasmin Baker cried out. Nobody heard her. She was down in the semi basement under the Plaistow Police Station, a red brick Victorian pile half a mile north of the Royal Docks which, at that time, were in the process of being converted into an airport.

Now that the lab result was in she knew that she had discovered the link between William Ferring and the body found in the ship 'Putra'. She was entering into the next phase of her investigation.

Yasmin actually loved the detective work she was doing in the underground labyrinth. She knew very well why she had been consigned to the 'dungeon' as the predominantly white male cockney action-men called her place of work. As a woman of mixed race and, what was even worse a fast-tracked sociology graduate, she assumed this would be her place for years to come. Always a high achiever, she was determined to solve this awful mystery of the girl in the void space, and she would not mind at all if she had to do it single handed. She had read up on carbon dioxide poisoning and found out that it could be one of the most frightening and drawn out processes causing a state of fear and panic, excessive heart rate and heart attack while carbon monoxide, on the other hand, sends a victim to sleep peacefully before snuffing out life. She was not yet hardened to the horrors of real life policing in the gang ridden old docklands in the East End of London, so in the

quiet of the night in her bed she had suffered for this girl who died when not much older than herself.

She knew there were some very high hurdles to jump so she set-to to piece together the narrative which would put the real perpetrator in the dock and off to prison. Unwisely, she had decided Ferring must be the guilty one before she had all the evidence collated but she knew the hard work started when a hunch had to be backed up by an unassailable set of hard facts.

It interested her that Ferring had been a suspect and indeed had been charged and tried for the murder of the girl she knew as Bronwyn Watkins ne Price, but that due to lack of an evidential connection to the body the case had been dismissed by the judge before the jury brought a verdict.

One of her minor courses had been criminology and she had thrilled with the knowledge about DNA analysis superceding fingerprinting as a method of putting a suspect at the scene. The technique was gaining traction and credibility. The police and judges

had been educated on the possibilities and some landmark convictions for theft and burglary and 3 homicides had been secured using DNA evidence.

She was not daunted but it meant that she had to be all the more vigilant in her construction of the case. She knew the defence would invoke the principal of "Double Jeopardy" but this case had not actually been tried but dismissed. The judge had been wise enough to realise that the prosecution might be able to secure a conviction if it gathered together sufficient evidence not available at the time of the trial. Was he prescient of progress in the analysis of DNA?

She managed to convince the constabulary that this may be the first time the force would be able to use the new technique of DNA identification to reopen the case. She did all the research to find out where Wilfy would be. She had taken a DNA sample. She found that there was a match to the semen found in the used condom. In consultation with the leader of the Rape Investigation Group they concluded that the technique was helping them in many open 'cold' cases and that the submission of

DNA evidence in this case should be encouraged.

Finally, were there sufficient grounds for the arrest of this man? The Chief Constable consulted a retained lawyer and the meeting resulted in a positive response. The warrant was issued and Captain Ferring was cautioned in his quarters two hours before the scheduled departure of his ship. His place was taken by a relief captain brought back from leave and Ferring left the ship accompanied by a senior police officer, apparently to casual observers, on normal business.

12. THE FINAL TRIAL WILFY GOES DOWN

His father was fond of pontificating in the bar of the Hare and Hounds: "The solicitor we've got in London; he's the best there is for criminal cases. He'll get a silk, bloody expensive. What else can I do? Don't you worry I'll get all the money back when he's let go. A crazy accusation like this can't possibly stick. Such a bloody waste of police and everyone else's time. It's bloody obvious, the queer husband did it. Why commit harry bloody kirry? They want to try him again. Double jeopardy I call it. The case should be closed, dead."

The solicitor was a little wiser and more sanguine. Having heard all the evidence he was not quite so optimistic when talking to Wilfy.

"You know, if this DNA evidence on the condom in the handkerchief stands up and is accepted as yours and hers together, you will have to admit in court that you had an intimate relationship. I'm afraid after that you won't have much chance. And then there's the

pullover, missed in the first investigation. Furthermore the judge will see that you lied in the first trial allowing Watkins to be assumed guilty. His suicide, which, at that time, seemed to exonerate you will be held against you. I am afraid that your course must be exactly the opposite from the first trial. You will have to own up to everything eventually, speak clearly and be absolutely honest. Your barrister will have two weapons only: your lack of intention, which he will force you to emphasize and the probability that you actually asked your colleague to free the victim from the compartment. They are, of course interdependent. If the prosecution manages to establish that you intended to kill her then your story about freeing her will be dismissed as a cover story. The prosecution will press this point to go for the murder conviction. We may hope for manslaughter but I can't see how we could manage an acquittal. We may be able to get Jones into the witness box but he probably won't be a very strong witness after all these years."

The prosecution managed to get Chief Inspector Ayub Khan, but still Wilfy's barrister wanted him to prevaricate.

"I recommend you plead not guilty to both charges but be ready to change your plea to guilty of manslaughter only if the judge and jury are inclined to believe the DNA evidence. You may leave your decision as to when, tactically, to change the plea to me. You realise that my job then will switch from saying you had no involvement to demonstrate that you had no intent to kill Bronwyn."

The trial commenced on the 3rd of November 1988 without incident. Wilfy was represented by a Q.C., Mr Theobald Curtis. There was a Q.C. for the prosecution.

Wilfy pleaded not guilty to murder and not guilty to manslaughter. It was up to the prosecution barrister, Mr. Douglas Furlow to open the case for the prosecution:

"This is a most distressing case where lust and self interest have led to the murder of a young woman in her prime. A young woman

recently married to a man who can be shown to be a dutiful and considerate husband. The prosecution will show that her husband was cuckolded by the accused who sought to hide his caddish behaviour by disposing of the woman who would have been able, at any time, to bear witness to his heinous carnal activities. He had committed the most disloyal and hateful crime against a marriage; that of continual and persistent acts of adultery. We will show that the accused seduced this young woman away from her husband while he was, by nature of his duty to the ship, unable to detect any clue of their disloyalty and that the accused satisfied his lust and at the same time scored evil advantage over his mentor who treated him as a friend and colleague.

“The prosecution will establish that there was intent in this homicide and the method of its execution and disposal was contrived by an active and educated mind knowing that there would most likely be a prolonged period in which the body would lie undiscovered.

“The prosecution will show that the evidence it will bring, due to advances in the science of DNA matching, will prove beyond

doubt that the accused, brought to trial and acquitted due to lack of evidence in 1972, lied under oath when he denied the adultery, lied under oath when he denied the final act of carnality and lied under oath when he denied being in the space known as the CO2 locker or store in which the body was found.

“The evidence we shall bring was collected painstakingly from the ship “Putra” when the suspicious death was reported shortly before the ship was broken up for scrap. We owe it to two alert labourers in Karachi and to the diligence of police both in Karachi and here that this material evidence will stand up to scientific scrutiny.

“To shorten the time for this retrial His Lordship has ruled that the transcripts of the previous trial of William Ferring will be brought into the proceedings in their entirety. All and any evidence and statements given there will be examined in this trial. New evidence will be shown to contradict statements made in the defence of the accused. Since the previous trial in 1972 certain materials, taken from the scene, have been subjected to higher levels of forensic scrutiny,

namely DNA analysis, and conclusions have been drawn which cast extreme doubt on the testimony of the accused. It is clear that the abandonment of the trial would not have occurred had the evidence now available had been brought to court at the time.

“With your lordship’s permission the prosecution will present a summary of the first trial which has been accepted as true and unbiased by the defence. My learned friend Mr. Daniels will read it to the court.”

The Q.C. bowed to the judge and left the court while his junior barrister spread a file on the desk before him.

“My lord and ladies and gentlemen of the jury this trial is the second concerning the disappearance of Mrs. Bronwyn Watkins which took place on or about the Sunday 6th July 1967 and was abandoned.

“The prime suspect at that time was the deceased’s husband, Oliver Watkins. However before he was brought to trial for this matter, he faced charges for gross indecency alleged to have taken place on the same evening and night with another man in a hotel in the

Stockwell area. The police case against the two men was heard in Camberwell Green Magistrates Court and dismissed due to lack of corroborative evidence. Shortly afterward Watkins was arrested and charged with the murder of Bronwyn, his wife. The body of a young woman found in the Royal Victoria Dock was assumed to be of the missing Bronwyn Watkins. He was remanded in custody in Brixton Prison and released a week later on bail pending further enquiries. The body was identified as to be that of another young woman. Soon after Watkins's release his lifeless body was found in the Thames by Vauxhall Bridge and witnesses on a passing bus stated that they saw him jump or dive into the shallow water below. The coroner found that Oliver Watkins took his own life while the balance of his mind was disturbed.

"The trial for murder was abandoned. There were no other suspects and the body of the missing woman was not found. The case was downgraded to the missing persons file.

"Five years later evidence was put forward by two labourers in Karachi leading to the discovery of Mrs Watkins's body in a space

known as the CO2 locker where cylinders of the gaseous fire extinguishant, carbon dioxide, were stored on board the vessel "Putra". Testimony from a steward was used to establish a case against the presently accused who was alleged to have been seen in and around the locker with the victim on the docking day in London on the 6th July 1967.

"The witness, Francisco Valera, stated that he saw the victim with the accused as he was passing on an errand for the captain. The witness statement was brought into doubt because of a possible tit for tat vendetta with the accused. The accused denied any association with the victim and the prosecution failed due to lack of hard or corroborative evidence.

"The prosecution in this trial is now able to bring evidence in the form of DNA identification which shows the accused's earlier statements to be untrue and supports the testimony of the steward, Francisco Valera.

"The jury will be issued with a full transcript of the previous trial. Anything said at that hearing by any witness or the accused

may be taken into consideration in arriving at the verdict in this trial.

"With your permission, my lord, the clerk will distribute the transcripts"

"Yes, of course." said Judge Roger Mortlake and he continued:

"The jury will go directly to the hotel assigned and may use the time to familiarise themselves with the transcript. Please remember you are not to discuss the matters of this trial or anything relating to it with each other or anyone else until you have heard all the evidence and are required to reach the verdict when you may deliberate among yourselves only.

"If you have any questions regarding the previous trial you will kindly write them down and, in the morning, the clerk will assess them and if necessary put them before me. Any answers I shall give shall be addressed to the court and the jury." He then banged his gavel on the table and announced:

"The court is adjourned until ten o'clock tomorrow morning."

"All rise," said an usher and the judge slid out by the door behind the bench from whence he had arrived some seventy minutes earlier.

At ten the following morning the judge cleared the public and press benches and opened proceedings by asking each member of the jury individually if they had read and understood the transcript of the previous trial and whether they had submitted any questions to the clerk. The judge answered the following written questions:

Question: "Does the law of double jeopardy apply here: the accused was acquitted in the first trial, how can he be tried again?"

Answer: "The defendant was not found to be 'not guilty' by the jury as the trial was curtailed therefore his guilt or innocence is still in question. "

Question: "Why did the judge in the first trial dismiss the case after witnesses had been heard but no verdict had been given?"

Answer: "The judge's ruling was based on the fact that the witnesses had been all been brought by the prosecution and their evidence

was circumstantial. The defence had no proof of innocence such as an alibi and was therefore at a disadvantage. He assessed that a jury could possibly bring a guilty verdict based on insubstantial evidence and the verdict would be unsafe."

Question: "Can the witnesses be cross examined in this trial?"

Answer: "Unfortunately not all, and it is my judgement that the transcript contains the cross examinations at the time and that should be sufficient. Police Inspector Aiyub Faisal Khan, now Deputy Superintendent of Police, is being brought by the prosecution and any evidence he may give may be subject to cross examination by the defence. Please note that forensic evidence which will be presented to you today and tomorrow may be seen to support the statements, made by the witnesses. The Superintendent may be questioned about the statements and the previous trial."

He then continued, "I have some more questions in front of me: I cannot answer any questions involving the substance of the witness statements. You must take them at

face value and decide on their value in bringing verdict.

“On the facts surrounding the incident in Karachi: The cargo ship ‘Putra’ was alongside in the harbour of Karachi unloading cargo when labourers suspected a dead body in the CO2 locker on the boat deck of the ship. They, in turn, informed the then Inspector in his office in the harbour. Mr Ferring came up to the police station on another matter and was accused of the crime by a steward whom he had himself accused of theft but later exonerated. Scotland Yard was called and they decided to send Detective Inspector Monroe to investigate.

“Both Detective Inspector Monroe and Deputy Superintendent Khan will be called by the prosecution and may be cross examined by the defence barrister.”

Superintendent Ayub Khan was sworn in and made a long statement which was entirely the same as the transcript before the jurors. Wilfy's barrister in cross examination asked:

“Suoerintendent, what makes you sure that the statement from the Steward, Francisco

Valera was not a complete fabrication designed to deflect attention from his own situation and incriminate his accuser?"

"Firstly, my lord, he made his statement freely and very clearly and typed it out without any pressure from any one. Secondly, my lord, the statement appears to be borne out by evidence."

In his summing-up the judge made it clear that premeditation was required for a murder conviction but culpable negligence including the placing a victim in danger's way was sufficient for a manslaughter conviction and made it mandatory if it lead to death.

"All stand," ordered the clerk. The judge entered from behind the bench and sat down. "You may be seated," said the clerk.

"The defendant will stand." Wilfy stood, clenching his buttocks with all his muscular might.

The judge observed the court, "The foreman of the jury," he said and a middle aged female in a tweed outfit stood up.

"Have the members of the jury arrived at unanimous verdict on the two charges brought against the accused?"

"We have, my lord."

"On the first charge of the murder of Miss Bronwyn Price on or about 6th July 1967 on board the vessel "Putra" in King George the Fifth dock in London."

"We find the defendant not guilty"

"On the second charge of the manslaughter due to gross negligence of Miss Bronwyn Price on or about the 6th of July 1967 on board the vessel "Putra" in dock in London."

"We find the defendant guilty as charged."

Wilfy slumped onto the p.v.c. cushion in the dock shaking visibly. The court had taken on a strange silence.

"The court thanks the jury for the diligence of its deliberations and the wisdom of the verdict. Thank you for giving up your time for this most valuable civic duty. You are dismissed and I will recommend that you are

not called again for jury service in your lifetime."

The jury filed out silently. They carried their responsibility like a burden. They knew they had, on the one hand, exonerated a man of the wilful murder of a young woman in her prime but, at the same time they had sanctioned that this man could be incarcerated for a considerable time.

"Sentencing will be announced tomorrow at ten a.m. at which time I will make a statement," announced the judge as he collected some papers together and nodded at the clerk.

"All rise."